DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 422 472 CE 076 983

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TITLE Separate Tables: Academic and Vocational Education Reforms in Traditional, Comprehensive High Schools.
INSTITUTION National Center for Research in Vocational Education, Berkeley, CA.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Vocational and Adult Education (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO MDS-1076
PUB DATE 1998-07-00
NOTE 72p.
CONTRACT V051A30004-97A; V051A30003-97A
AVAILABLE FROM National Center for Research in Vocational Education, Materials Distribution Service, Western Illinois University, 46 Horrabin Hall, Macomb, IL 61455; toll-free phone: 800-637-7652 ($7).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Education; Case Studies; *Educational Change; Educational Innovation; Educational Research; High Schools; *School Restructuring; *Tech Prep; *Vocational Education

ABSTRACT

A study examined two traditional, comprehensive high schools, both of which had been involved with the school restructuring efforts advocated by the Coalition of Essential Schools. Shortly after their commitment to essential school changes, the schools became involved in a series of vocational education reforms referred to as Tech Prep. Case studies of each school were developed that included the story of the school's reform efforts: an overall chronology of the change efforts and events that influenced the course of change. Conclusions were drawn about what happened to vocational education reforms in these schools engaged in essential school change and interactions or relationships that occurred between the essential school restructuring reforms and the vocational education initiatives in each school. A cross-case analysis identified themes from the data about factors that affected the course and outcomes of the two reform initiatives. Although the reforms struggled in both schools, the case studies revealed one was making substantively greater headway in implementation of both initiatives because of two site-related factors: (1) the more successful school had clear linkages between essential school ideas and vocational education reforms; and (2) the other school had a huge investment in maintaining the status quo. Four central conclusions were drawn from a cross-case perspective: (1) general issues of reform and the importance of context in change efforts for secondary schools; (2) considerations of simultaneous reform efforts in schools; (3) continuing centrality of the academic core; and (4) its impact for vocational education reforms. Policy implications were constructed on a framework using the concepts of will, capacity, and accountability. (Contains 47 references) (YLB)

ED 422 472

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SEPARATE TABLES: ACADEMIC AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION REFORMS IN TRADITIONAL, COMPREHENSIVE HIGH SCHOOLS

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SEPARATE TABLES: ACADEMIC AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION REFORMS IN TRADITIONAL, COMPREHENSIVE HIGH SCHOOLS

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Supported by
The Office of Vocational and Adult Education
U.S. Department of Education

July 1998 MDS-1076

FUNDING INFORMATION

Project Title:	National Center for Research in Vocational Education
Grant Number:	V051A30003-97A/V051A30004-97A
Act under which Funds Administered:	Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act P.L. 98-524
Source of Grant:	Office of Vocational and Adult Education U.S. Department of Education Washington, DC 20202
Grantee:	The Regents of the University of California c/o National Center for Research in Vocational Education 2030 Addison Street, Suite 500 Berkeley, CA 94720-1674
Director:	David Stern
Percent of Total Grant Financed by Federal Money:	100%
Dollar Amount of Federal Funds for Grant:	$4,500,000

Disclaimer:

This publication was prepared pursuant to a grant with the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education. Grantees undertaking such projects under government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their judgement in professional and technical matters. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official U.S. Department of Education position or policy.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The last decade has witnessed a plethora of research on significant restructuring and reform efforts within schools. Yet, for the most part, this research has tended to focus on the fate of a singular reform initiative, ignoring the larger reality of the school site that almost inevitably encompasses multiple and simultaneous change efforts. Thus, little is known about how substantive and systemic reform initiatives interact within schools or what consequences one may hold for the other. This study examined two traditional, comprehensive high schools, both of which have been involved with the school restructuring efforts advocated by the Coalition of Essential Schools. Shortly after their commitment to essential school changes, the schools also became involved in the series of vocational education reforms loosely referred to as "Tech Prep."

Briefly, an examination of what happened to both reforms in these schools was investigated in two ways. First, single case studies of each school were developed. These include the story of the schools' reform efforts, including an overall chronology of the change efforts engaged in as well as influential/significant events that influenced the course of change. Conclusions were then drawn about (1) what happened to vocational education reforms within the context of the traditional, comprehensive high schools engaged in essential school change and (2) the interactions and/or relationships (or lack thereof) that occurred between the essential school restructuring reforms and the vocational education initiatives in each school. Then, a second cross-case analysis was made to identify themes that emerged from the data about factors that affected the course and outcomes of the two reform initiatives. Finally, implications for policymakers were drawn.

The single cases focused on Oakfield, a small, rural comprehensive high school, and Edgewater, a large suburban high school. While the essential school and vocational education reforms struggled in both schools, the single case studies revealed that Oakfield clearly was making substantively greater headway in implementation of both initiatives. This was largely because of two site-related factors: (1) Oakfield was able to begin to establish clear and complementary linkages between the essential school ideas and the vocational education reforms; and (2) Edgewater had a huge investment in terms of community approbation and measures of student success in maintaining the status quo of a traditional, comprehensive high school.

From a cross-case perspective, there were four central conclusions drawn. The first of these concerned general issues of reform and the importance of context in change efforts for secondary schools. The second drew upon considerations of simultaneous reform efforts in schools; specifically, the essential school and vocational education reforms. This alluded to the fact that unless the complementary aspects of simultaneous reforms are sought out and emphasized, the initiatives are likely to be seen as competing. The third and fourth conclusions extend the examination of essential school and vocational education reforms by focusing respectively on the continuing centrality of the academic core in secondary schools and the impact this holds for vocational education reforms.

The implications for policymakers are constructed on an explanatory framework using the concepts of will, capacity, and accountability. The fundamental argument presented is that vocational education reforms face serious challenges in all three of these conceptual areas when it comes to implementation in traditional, comprehensive high schools. This will likely have the effect of placing the reform efforts from the start in a negative position and can allow the idiosyncrasies of local context and the dominance of the status quo to ride roughshod over the reform to an even greater extent than might be expected.

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INTRODUCTION

> "Will you accept us?" the shop teacher asked. The question stung. The teachers in the academic departments knew what he meant but cared not to address it.
>
> The mathematics teacher: "You'll have to knock some of the rust off your math. But you can teach us a lot about how to teach. We talk too much. You give the kids the tasks. . . . You know about Exhibitions. We have much to learn from each other. . . . We have some rust to knock off too, and learn some new ways of teaching . . . from you." No one followed; the subject was painful. The committee's drift toward a program focusing on the traditional intellectual areas of the curriculum—for all students—obviously threatened some of the teachers of vocational courses.
>
> —from T. R. Sizer (1992), *Horace's School*, pp. 137-138

Perhaps nowhere can the rift between academic and vocational secondary education be viewed in starker relief than in the reform movements associated with each. Within traditional, comprehensive high schools engaged in such multiple reform efforts, work around these initiatives can create an arena for clashing ideologies and interests that end up emphasizing differences rather than looking for commonalties; competing for the limited time and energies of participants; and, as illustrated in the above quote, assigning (even if only implicitly) centrality, value, and worth to some while marginalizing others.

Fairly or unfairly, and for a number of reasons, some of which are explored in this paper, the Coalition of Essential Schools (and later the national Re: Learning Project co-sponsored by the Coalition and The Education Commission of the States in 1989) has largely been associated with the academic side of secondary education reform. The changes advocated for schools were to be systemic, schoolwide, and predicated upon the nine common principles which encapsulate the philosophic imperatives and beliefs of the Coalition. The principles were then to be interpreted at the individual school level in accordance with the school's particular context and understanding to guide the school's change effort.

Briefly, the nine common principles pertain to the following:

1. The school should focus on helping students learn to use their minds well. It should not attempt to be comprehensive at the expense of its central intellectual purpose.

2. The school's goals should be simple: that each student master a limited number of essential skills and areas of knowledge.

3. The school's goals should apply to all students although the means to the goals will vary as those students themselves vary.

4. Teaching and learning should be personalized to the maximum extent feasible. To that end, a goal of no more than 80 students per teacher should be vigorously pursued, and decisions about curriculum, allocation of time, and choice of teaching materials and their presentation must rest unreservedly with the school's principal and staff.

5. The governing metaphor of the school should be student-as-worker, teacher-as-coach, rather than the more traditional teacher-as-deliverer-of-instructional services.

6. The diploma should be awarded upon a successful final demonstration of mastery—an exhibition—of the central skills and knowledge of the school's program.

7. The tone of the school should explicitly and self-consciously stress values of unanxious expectation ("I won't threaten you, but I expect much of you."), of trust (until abused), and of decency (fairness, generosity, and tolerance).

8. The principal and teachers should see themselves as generalists first (teachers and scholars in general education) and specialists second (experts in one particular discipline).

9. Ultimate administrative and budget target should be a per-pupil cost of no more than 10% above that of traditional schools. Inevitably, this will require the phased reduction of some services provided in many comprehensive secondary schools.

Within basically the same time frame and in some of the same schools, a second initiative aimed at changing the conceptualization and organization of vocational education entered the scene. Funded by the federal Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Act of 1990 and referred to as Tech Prep or school-to-work programs, these reform initiatives were broadly conceptualized to guide high school students to courses which would prepare them with the necessary academic and technological skills to pursue

postsecondary education at least to an associate degree level. More specifically, these reforms addressed four imperatives: (1) bring a career focus to secondary school curriculum; (2) achieve an integrated secondary school curriculum, especially vocational and academic skills; (3) provide services to special needs students; and (4) build from collaborative planning processes that involve students, parents, community and business representatives, as well as school staff. Like the essential school initiative, these vocational education reforms also called for a serious reconsideration of the work of secondary schools and for fundamental and schoolwide changes, especially in the areas of pedagogy (curriculum/instruction) and school organization (governance/structure).

While there has been a good deal of research that has focused on essential school initiatives and changes in vocational education, there is little evidence of any attempts to examine these two important initiatives in tandem. Vocational education and Tech Prep have largely remained the province of those most interested in one set of issues; essential schools are the property of an entirely different group of researchers. Because of this schism, there is a paucity of field-based, empirical research that examines both reforms as embedded in the context of traditional, comprehensive high schools. Specifically, little is yet known about how one reform coming on the heels of another reform and both aimed at substantive, whole-school change interact within these institutions and the consequences one may hold for the other. Consequently, the "thick descriptions" necessary for understanding the complex and interactive nature of school change processes and the hard data needed for informed decisionmaking in policy areas affecting schools are notably lacking.

This study examines two traditional, comprehensive high schools, both of which have been involved with the school restructuring efforts advocated by the Coalition and the state Re: Learning Project's organization, the Illinois Alliance of Essential Schools (referred to in this report as the Alliance), since 1989. Shortly after this commitment to essential school activities, the schools also became involved in the series of vocational education reforms loosely referred to as Tech Prep. Both schools continued to participate in both essential school and vocational education/Tech Prep initiatives for the duration of this study.

METHODOLOGY

Problem

The purpose of this study is to examine what happened to vocational education reforms within the context of these traditional high schools already involved in essential school change initiatives. The focus of this examination is bounded by the parameters of the two change initiatives within each of the individual schools. Each school followed a different path, had different numbers of individuals actively involved, had different priorities, faced different contingencies, and focused on different means of implementation. While there are vast differences between the schools, there is also a bounding commonality in that each presents a compelling portrait of a traditional, comprehensive high school attempting substantive change.

An examination of what happened to both reforms in these schools is investigated in two ways. First, single case studies of each school are presented. Included in these is the story of the schools' reform efforts, including an overall chronology of the change efforts engaged in as well as influential/significant events that influenced the course of change. Conclusions are then drawn about (1) what happened to vocational education reforms within the context of the traditional, comprehensive high schools engaged in essential school change and (2) the interactions and/or relationships (or lack thereof) that occurred between the essential school restructuring reforms and the vocational education initiatives in each school. Then a second cross-case analysis is made to identify themes that emerged from the data about factors that affected the course and outcome of the two reform initiatives. Finally, implications for policymakers are drawn.

Site Selection

The site selection was necessarily purposeful and based on a number of qualifying criteria. First, the schools selected had been involved with both the essential school and vocational education reforms for five years. At least as far as the essential school initiative is concerned, the schools are doing about as well with the reform as any of the other traditional, comprehensive high schools involved in Illinois. Employing this criterion of evidence of sustained efforts with both initiatives permitted the focus of the investigation to concentrate more directly on relatively mature relationships rather than being diverted by what might be early implementation issues. At least some consequences of actions taken,

the development or lack thereof of relationships, and the interplay between two major, national secondary school reform movements should be evidenced within this time period.

The second criterion concerned the selection of traditional, comprehensive high schools. In spite of nearly two decades of intense scrutiny and criticism, the clearly dominant pattern for American secondary education institutions remains the traditional, comprehensive high school. Added to this, of all educational institutions, the traditional, comprehensive high school has proven to be the most impervious to substantive change efforts (Newmann, 1992; Prestine, 1994b). Thus, if any reform sets its sights on bringing substantive change to secondary education, it must consider, weigh, and devise means to deal with the consequences of this sturdy and ubiquitous design.

A third criterion concerned school organization and community/geographic characteristics. Two senior high schools were selected for this study. Although both of the schools are located in Illinois, every effort was made to select schools with as diverse organizational and geographic characteristics as possible. Thus, one high school is small, with less than 300 students, and located in a rural area. The second high school is located in a suburban area and enrolls over 2,800 students divided between two campuses, one housing grades 9-10 and the other, 11-12. Both of these schools are identified only by pseudonyms and the respondents by position.

Data Collection

Investigation of the possible linkages between the two change initiatives in these schools was based on data gathered in part from an intensive, longitudinal study of essential school change in Illinois. Data gathering for the larger study has been ongoing since 1989. More intensive data collection for the purposes of this study was initiated in spring 1995.

Intensive, open-ended interviews and follow-up focused interviews at each site were a primary means of data collection. Over the nearly two years of this study, the number of intensive interviews varied somewhat by site. At the rural school, 12 individual respondents were interviewed out of a total of approximately 35 teachers, staff members, and administrators. At the suburban high school, a total of 34 individual respondents were interviewed out of a total of approximately 160 teachers, staff members, and

administrators. (Total staff numbers varied somewhat by year at each school.) These key respondents included building principals, assistant principals, teacher union leaders, teacher coordinators for the Alliance, Tech Prep coordinators, and vocational education and core academic classroom teachers. No attempt was made to interview a representative sample of staff at either school. Rather, the primary criterion used for respondent identification was involvement with and knowledge of either the essential school or Tech Prep reforms.

Voluminous forms of documentary and archival evidence (especially as related to essential school efforts) were also available and examined. Agendas and summaries from essential school and Tech Prep team meetings and general faculty meetings; relevant school board minutes; Coalition and Alliance communications and correspondence; brochures; pamphlets; or other publications highlighting either initiative, local newspaper accounts, and individual school end-of-year site reports, plans, and grant applications to the Alliance were collected.

Data Analysis

Overall, a qualitative, thematic strategy of data analysis was employed to organize the data, to make judgments about the meaning and importance of the lines of inquiry, and to allow the focus of inquiry to be first at a single-case, then a cross-case perspective (Merriam, 1988; Rist, 1982). Preliminary data analysis was first completed at the individual school level. In essence, two single case studies emerged from this process and are reported as such. Data was then aggregated across both schools in searching for commonalties and shared themes. This approach allowed important themes and categories significant to the issue of programmatic linkages to emerge from the data across the two cases according to grounded theory precepts (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Miles & Huberman, 1984). Through triangulation of data, potential problems of construct validity addressed as multiple sources of evidence essentially provide multiple measures of the same phenomenon (Rist, 1982).

Two Caveats

The reader will doubtlessly notice that the major emphasis in this report is on essential school restructuring efforts. Thus, the role of the vocational education reforms is largely viewed within the Coalition change context in the schools. This in no way is

intended to devalue or question the significance of the vocational education reform initiatives. Rather, this approach is a consequence of several factors. First, both schools identified themselves much more directly with the Coalition reform effort than they did with the vocational education reforms. This may have been because the Coalition reforms simply hit the schools first. Nevertheless, this importance for both schools was clearly evidenced by the incorporation of Coalition/Alliance logos onto school letterheads, press release materials, and even over the front door of one of the buildings.

This emphasis is also simply a reflection of the researcher's previous orientation. In point of fact, this researcher has been involved since 1989 with looking at essential school restructuring in Alliance schools. Thus, much of the database is centered on and relates to the essential school restructuring efforts of the schools. The fact that over this period of time any connection to or examination of vocational education issues or reforms have been minor and in passing is, in itself, a most telling fact.

A second factor must be noted as well. In both of the schools, references to vocational education or voc tech are only rarely used. One respondent summed it up well: "Voc tech is not a word you will hear at this school. We do talk about Tech Prep but voc tech does not exist here." With near unanimity (and, perhaps, not a great deal of insight), respondents at both schools used the term, "Tech Prep," in lieu of references to "vocational education" and/or the newer reform initiatives focusing on career development, computer technology, and school-to-work activities. This overlap, at times, leads to some confusion as to exactly what is being referred to as "Tech Prep." Respondents, other than the Tech Prep coordinators themselves or those directly connected to the vocational area, had only the vaguest ideas of what Tech Prep constituted, let alone the distinction between vocational education, Tech Prep, and school-to-work. This confusion extended from (and was nearly unanimous among) everyone, including building principals and curriculum directors. Thus, the lack of clarity in the uses of the terms "voc ed" and "Tech Prep" displayed in the following cases is merely an accurate reflection of the data collected. Usage of these terms appeared not only to shift from individual to individual but often within conversations with the same individual. While every effort was made by the researcher to clarify the use of the terms with the respondents, this was not possible in all cases and often caused more confusion for the respondent. Again, the salient point is that the confusion in terminology evidenced below *is* reflective of the respondents' foggy understandings and is true to the data gathered. To alter their words or their understandings would be unacceptable as well

as unethical. In most of the direct quotations that follow, "Tech Prep" is used as an inclusive term, referring to what is traditionally considered the vocational education area as well as the newer vocational education reforms unless noted otherwise or clarified by context of the statement.

OAKFIELD CASE STUDY

Findings

Context

Located 25 miles northwest of the mid-sized, largely working class city of Gotham, the Oakfield Consolidated Unit School District encompasses nearly 70 square miles of predominantly rich agricultural land in central Illinois. Geographically, the district's expanse resembles nothing so much as a miniature state of Tennessee rotated slightly south and pointing directly toward Gotham. All the district's school buildings are located in the small community of Oakfield (population under 1,000), which itself is located in the far western one-third of the district. The vast majority of the district's students ride buses to school with some spending more than one hour en route each way.

The district's populace is almost evenly split between newer residents and those who are considered "old Oakfield." The newer residents tend to live in more newly developed areas of the district that are closer in proximity to Gotham. Most of these residents moved from Gotham to garner the benefits of a more rural setting but retain close ties to the city through employment. On the other hand, the "old Oakfield" residents have deep ties to the small community and the small town/agrarian-based way of life it represents, and are able to trace back to several generations of family farming operations or connections to the few local businesses. While a majority of the "old Oakfield" residents now commute to jobs elsewhere, they retain an unshakable allegiance to the community. Mostly because of this latter group, Oakfield has consistently resisted any attempts at school consolidation with neighboring and more prosperous districts. As one respondent characterized it, Oakfield is "a small town struggling to maintain an identity. It's been willing to tax itself to support a school that offers kids all the things they need rather than consolidating and losing the identity of the school. So the community is very cohesive. Last year, out of 52 graduates, we gave 38 scholarships with locally generated funds."

A certain placidity, rectitude, and insularity seems to imbue the community, and the school as its focal institution.

Oakfield Junior/Senior High School (grades 7-12) is housed in a single building and serves a total of approximately 350 students. Although the building is several decades old, it is well-maintained although not renovated. There is almost a feeling of stepping back 30 years in time as one enters the building. Trophies from band and choral music competitions as well as athletics line the walls of the single hallway that traverses the length of the school, from the junior high "wing" to the senior high area. Posters announce pep rallies, school dances, and FFA meetings. A large gymnasium with impressive bleacher seating capacity is decorated with banners from the athletic conference area schools. The classrooms fit a traditional secondary school mode—student desks in rows facing the front of rooms. Both home economics and shop rooms have usable but outdated equipment.

Thirty-five staff members teach in the building although not all are full-time. The junior high school claims its own academic area teachers but shares with the high school the art, music, physical education, agriculture, business, and home economics teachers. The teaching staff can be described as stable and tenured, above the state's median of 14.4 at 17.3 years of experience. Like the student body it serves, the teaching staff is all white.

According to Oakfield CUSD's 1996 School Report Card, approximately 20% of Oakfield students are considered low income, and there are no limited English proficiency students. The attendance rate reported is 93.7%, dropout rate is 1.4%, and average class size is 15.4. Approximately one-third of the students are in a college-prep curriculum and take one of two foreign language classes and/or mathematics through calculus; and, according to the 1996 Technology Committee Report, another one-fourth identify themselves as Tech Prep students and have selected either an agriculture, business, or home economics strand. In recent years, the business strand has become the largest in terms of student numbers, followed by agriculture and home economics.

Essential School Programs and Oakfield

A member of the Alliance since 1989, Oakfield's essential school restructuring efforts can likely best be described as erratic. Like other member schools, it has faced many external contingencies largely outside the control of anyone. Over a seven-year period of

time, Oakfield has seen four superintendents and five principals come and go. In 1991-1992, the district was confronted with a referendum based on an obscure section of the Illinois School Code that would allow a simple majority of the votes cast to dissolve the school district. Teachers, uncertain as to whether or not they would have jobs or whether there would even be a school, lost interest in anything other than discussing the various possible scenarios. The ballot eventually failed, but emotions ran high as the issue pitted "old Oakfield" residents who wished to retain the district against the newcomers who saw advantages in aligning with larger, more prosperous, and progressive districts. (For the purposes of this study, it is important to keep in mind that while this issue certainly showed the clear divisions within the district, the role of vocational education was never a major issue between the two groups.) In 1993-1994, Oakfield faced the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) mandated Quality Review Process that, as in other Alliance schools across the state, ground to a halt all other efforts as the school concentrated on and worked mightily to gather and collate the voluminous information required (Prestine, 1994b).

Internally, there were other difficulties and obstacles. The first years of the essential school effort were spent, as one respondent noted, "spinning our wheels and getting nowhere." Part of this difficulty was attributable to a lack of firm commitment to the essential school principles. To say the least, Oakfield's entry into the Alliance was less than propitious. Although the Alliance had called for anonymous balloting of teachers and staff to show that a minimum of 75% were committed to participation, the superintendent at that time saw Alliance membership as something he wanted. When the first balloting (which was anonymous) resulted in a less than 75% approval vote, the superintendent took over the meeting, called the first ballot a straw poll, and had the faculty revote, this time requiring that they sign their ballots. Not surprisingly, there was a unanimous vote for membership. The naming of the first teacher-coordinator was handled in a likewise heavy-handed manner, and the individual reluctantly and unenthusiastically accepted, clearly feeling coerced and cornered into accepting the position.

After the first year of Oakfield's membership in the Alliance and with the imprimaturs of the Coalition on his résumé, the superintendent departed for a new position in a larger district, as did the principal. Neither the new superintendent nor the new principal were familiar with or committed to essential school ideas. Under their leadership, essential school efforts were quickly preempted by what were seen as more pressing issues. In particular, planned time for Faculty Steering Committee meetings to focus on

essential school efforts quickly degenerated into general faculty meetings concerned with non-essential school issues. Control of grant monies to the school for essential school restructuring purposes came under the superintendent's direct and exclusive purview. Plans for instituting common planning time fell by the wayside. A pervasive gloom and deepening resentment festered among those faculty still committed to essential school ideas. In frustration, the Steering Committee's leadership appealed directly to the then state coordinator for the Alliance for assistance. This brought a swift response from the state coordinator. In a 1991 letter addressed to the district superintendent and written on ISBE stationary, the state coordinator directly addressed each of the above-mentioned concerns in a series of questions posed to the superintendent, noting, "the nature of an essential school program is based on trust, decency, and unanxious expectations. To the extent that a school is able to establish such an environment, will determine the degree of success the program will enjoy. . . . A formal written response to these questions should be prepared cooperatively between the school's administration, the Steering Committee, the coordinator, and the Alliance coach. It is the view of this office that unless these issues are addressed in a mutually satisfactorily [sic] manner, funding for this year will not be forthcoming. Also, to the extent that these issues can be resolved will determine the amount of funds that will be awarded for the remainder of the funding cycle." By early January 1992, the Oakfield CUSD had hammered out a compromise and joint response: "We hope that the following response . . . will put to rest your concerns about our progress as an essential school. . . . The Steering Committee is now working collaboratively with the school's administration at this time. . . . Despite the changes in our district's Board of Education, in our superintendent, in our principal, and in our coach, the administration and faculty remain committed to essential schools."

Given these external and internal upheavals over the years, the progress of change at Oakfield can be characterized as, at best, uneven with most of the essential school work focusing on two areas: (1) simplifying goals and (2) developing crosscurricular projects. One of the first tasks Oakfield engaged in upon becoming an essential school was to define or redefine the nine common principles to fit their particular situation (see Table 1).

Table 1

Common Principles	Oakfield's Definition
1. The school should focus on helping adolescents to learn to use their minds well. Schools should not attempt to be comprehensive if such a claim is made at the expense of the school's central intellectual purpose.	1. It is the job of the school to provide students with a body of information so that they will be able to think analytically, skeptically, creatively, and critically to generate effective and appropriate responses.
2. The school's goals should be simple: that each student master a limited number of essential skills and areas of knowledge. While these skills and areas will, to varying degrees, reflect the traditional academic disciplines, the program's design should be shaped by the intellectual and imaginative powers and competencies that students need, rather than necessarily by "subject" as conventionally defined. The aphorism, "Less Is More," should dominate: curricular decisions should be guided by the aim of thorough student mastery and achievement rather than by an effort merely to "cover content."	2. Each student is expected to master a limited number of essential skills and areas of knowledge such as reading, listening, writing, speaking, computations, problem solving, independent research, and socialization. Curricular decisions should be guided by mastery and achievement rather than by just covering content.
3. The school's goals should apply to all students, while the means to these goals will vary as those students themselves vary. School practice should be tailor-made to meet the needs of every group or class.	3. The school's goals should apply to all students, while the methods of reaching these goals will vary as the students vary.
4. Teaching and learning should be personalized to the maximum feasible extent. Efforts should be directed toward a goal that no teacher would have direct responsibility for more than 80 students. To capitalize on this personalization, decisions about the details of the course of study, the use of students' and teachers' time, and the choice of teaching materials and specific pedagogies must be unreservedly placed in the hands of the principal and staff.	4. Teaching and learning should be personalized to the maximum feasible extent, considering the student's individual and group-related needs. Ideally, a teacher should have the responsibility of no more than eighty students. The basic course of study, materials, and time will be determined by principal and teaching staff.
5. The governing practical metaphor of the school should be student-as-worker, rather than the more familiar metaphor of teacher-as-deliverer-of-instructional-services. Accordingly, a prominent pedagogy will be coaching—that is, to provoke students to learn how to learn and thus to teach themselves.	5. The basic policy of the school will be student-as-worker. The teacher's role will be that of coach motivating and guiding students to learn how to learn.

Table 1 (cont.)

6. Students entering secondary school studies are those who can show competence in language and elementary mathematics. Students of traditional high school age, but not yet at appropriate levels of competence to enter secondary school studies, will be provided intensive remedial work to assist them in quickly meeting these standards. The diploma should be awarded upon a successful final demonstration of mastery for graduation—an "Exhibition." The exhibition by the student of his or her grasp of the central skills and knowledge of the school's program may be jointly administered by the faculty and higher authorities. As the diploma is awarded when earned, the school's program proceeds with no strict age grading and no system of "credits earned" by "time spent" in class. The emphasis is on the students' demonstration that they can do important things.	6. First, students shall meet a minimum competence in language and mathematics. Students who do not meet minimum competency levels shall receive remediation through summer school and tutoring programs. Second, graduation from secondary school is based on an "exhibition" which demonstrates the student's ability to assimilate his or her secondary education.
7. The tone of the school should explicitly and self-consciously stress values of unanxious expectation ("I won't threaten you, but I expect much of you"), of trust (until abused), and of decency (the values of fairness, generosity and tolerance). Incentives appropriate to the school's particular students and teachers [should] be emphasized, and parents should be treated as essential collaborators.	7. The tone of the school should be supportive; however, expectations shall be high. Ethical behavior should be stressed. Students should learn to be intrinsically motivated. Parental involvement shall be a high priority. Incentives for student performance will be determined by the faculty.
8. The principal and teachers should perceive themselves as generalists first (teachers and scholars in general education) and specialists second (experts in but one particular discipline). Staff should expect multiple obligations (teacher-counselor-manager) and a sense of commitment to the entire school.	8. The principal and teachers should perceive themselves as generalists first (emphasizing and stressing the essential skills listed in Principle #2) and specialists second. Staff should have a sense of commitment to the well-being of the students and the school.
9. Ultimate administrative and budget targets should include, in addition to total student loads per teacher of eighty or fewer pupils, substantial time for collective planning by teachers, competitive salaries for staff, and ultimate per pupil cost not to exceed that at traditional schools by more than 10%. To accomplish this, administrative plans may have to show the phased reduction or elimination of some services now provided students in many traditional, comprehensive secondary schools.	9. Teachers should have no more than 80 pupil contacts per day and should have sufficient time for collective planning. Salaries should be competitive with other districts and the professions. A concerted effort will be made to retain all possible course offerings, even if additional costs are incurred.

For the most part, Oakfield's "redefinitions" were barely more than paraphrases of the original principles and, of all the Alliance schools, Oakfield's interpretation showed the least variation. In part, this cautious, conservative approach may have been due to the early confusion and consternation over exactly what essential school restructuring entailed. In

part, it may have been due to a lack of imagination and an inability or unwillingness to move beyond the boundaries. Whatever the case, there are two important pieces that deserve further note. First, although the Coalition's principle #9 calls for the "phased reduction or elimination of some services now provided students," Oakfield's redefinition specifically calls for "a concerted effort" to be made to "retain all possible course offerings." Clearly, Oakfield was not prepared to eliminate any of the conventional offerings or trappings of a traditional, comprehensive high school.

In Oakfield's case, one of the most noteworthy of the redefinitions was that of principle #2. In the Oakfield CUSD definitions, which were established in 1991, "Each student is expected to master a limited number of essential skills and areas of knowledge such as reading, listening, writing, speaking, computations, problem solving, independent research, and socialization. Curricular decisions should be guided by mastery and achievement rather than just covering content." For reasons not entirely clear, of all the skill areas listed, the school became fixated on listening skills and spent nearly two years creating projects, standards, and assessment devices for the exhibition of mastery of listening skills. Perhaps because they were uncertain, unwilling, and/or unable to head into other areas of change, this one area came to consume nearly all time and effort.

Eventually, however, the redefinition of this principle formed the basis for the development of "The Oakfield High School Graduate," or as referred to by the school, simply the "Oakfield Graduate" (see Table 2). These are a codified set of standards required for graduation from the school. As the current principal noted, "We now have our 'Oakfield Graduate,' which [are] the requirements for getting out of this school [which were] developed by the essential school committee. It's the umbrella under which everything else in the building exists. If it doesn't fit under that umbrella, we don't do it." The Board of Education adopted the requirements as an addition to the Carnegie unit requirements in 1995, and these will apply for the first time to the graduating class of 1999.

Table 2

"Oakfield Graduate"

During their high school career, the students will document or demonstrate excellence or proficiency in each of the areas outlined below.

1. COMMUNICATION
   The OHS graduate demonstrates excellence or proficiency in the following:
   - Speaking and writing articulately and effectively
   - Reading and listening actively

2. PROBLEM SOLVING
   The OHS graduate demonstrates excellence or proficiency in the following:
   - Researching
   - Investigating and using the scientific method
   - Computing and calculating
   - Critical thinking

3. DESIGN, PRODUCTION, AND PERFORMANCE
   The OHS graduate demonstrates excellence or proficiency in one or more of the following areas:
   - Drama/dance
   - Music
   - Visual arts
   - Media
   - Technology
   - Prose or verse

4. SOCIAL AND WORLD RELATIONSHIPS
   The OHS graduate demonstrates excellence or proficiency in the following:
   - Concepts of U.S. history, citizenship, and government
   - Knowledge of other peoples and their cultures

5. CONCEPTS OF A NATURAL ENVIRONMENT
   The OHS graduate demonstrates excellence of proficiency in the key concepts of the environment, including the following:
   - The physical, biological, and chemical components
   - Their interrelatedness
   - Awareness of personal impact on the environment

6. PERSONAL GROWTH
   The OHS graduate demonstrates excellence or proficiency in the following:
   - Life and career planning
   - Ways to develop and maintain wellness
   - Social interaction

As Oakfield saw it, the construction of the "Oakfield Graduate" statement was in keeping with Sizer's advice to engage in "backwards planning." That is, they sought to identify what a graduate from their high school should look like, what attributes they would like the graduate to have, and then set out to determine the means by which to accomplish this. However, this work was accomplished within a narrow subject-oriented, curricular offerings framework and never took into account other issues or considerations such as preparation for work. Also, the accountability attached to this statement as well as to other innovations such as portfolios and exhibitions is at present unknown. The senior exhibition has not yet been implemented and exists only on paper. Emphasis on portfolio development is uneven and seems to be determined more by the inclination of the individual teacher than anything else. For the most part, it seems quite plausible that students will be able to meet the goals of the "Oakfield Graduate" simply by passing through the traditional curriculum and accumulating Carnegie units.

During this time, Oakfield also worked on developing crosscurricular units, all-school projects, and speaking and writing skills across the curriculum. Homerooms were established and student portfolios were required, with the latter constructed as something like a student-mediated permanent record.

Yet, for every step forward, there seemed to be one or two back. Paradoxically, for all that Oakfield has done, it does not seem to have actually done much at all outside of the development of some crosscurricular units and the "Oakfield Graduate" document. After a review of progress in 1995, an external evaluator for the Alliance put it this way:

> Oakfield strikes me as being rather like the school equivalent of a "good girl." It does everything it's told to do, studies hard, and avoids risks. It's the only school . . . [that] defined characteristics of the "Oakfield Graduate"; it worked hard to draw most of the faculty into the essential school movement, and succeeded for the most part; it's created a new faculty handbook and orientation workshop; it's held numerous one- and two-day faculty and staff workshops and retreats; it's begun work on authentic assessment and instituted portfolios with little fanfare. . . . Part of the problem may be that as fast as Oakfield institutes a change (and that is not very fast), it rather rapidly does something to undercut it.

A classic example of this was illustrated by one of the first attempts to develop a crosscurricular unit. This unit was to be a planned effort between chemistry and home economics. The unit never saw the light of day, however, because the grade levels of the

courses did not match with chemistry being an 11th grade subject and home economics an 8th grade subject. This was apparently an aspect that was never considered by anyone while the planning for the unit was proceeding. In another instance, Oakfield did indeed implement homerooms during their first year with the Alliance in order to help personalize learning and work on student self-esteem. However, it quickly became clear that no one really knew what to do with the homeroom time, and by the third year, the homeroom was used mostly to show Channel One. Oakfield may be a classic illustration of the old maxim, "the more things change, the more they stay the same."

Vocational Education, Tech Prep, and Essential School Programs

Historically, vocational education has been perceived as having an important role at Oakfield High School. As noted by several of the respondents, traditional vocational education courses are viewed as being an integral part of the school even though there are only three teachers. (Of these three, the business and agriculture teachers are full-time teachers but have split assignments with the junior high school. The home economics teacher actually retired three years ago but continues to carry her program as a part-time teacher.) Nonetheless, for the Oakfield teachers, the very existence of the traditional voc ed courses is a demonstration of a continuing commitment to vocational education. This is not surprising given its rural location and the strong agricultural ties of the community.

What is surprising is the relative lack of attention given to the place of the vocational education program in the essential school initiative. A section of Oakfield's initial application for membership in the Alliance in 1989 was devoted to responses to faculty questions and concerns about Alliance membership. Only one of the 30 issues raised specifically questioned whether provisions were to be made for vocational education. The response read, "No special compensation or dispensation is made for any particular discipline. The possibilities in the Vo. Ed. area, though, could be limitless—given the hands-on nature of such courses." At least until 1995, these "possibilities" appear to never have been explored, let alone deliberately nurtured or developed. When they did occur, it was through the efforts of the individuals heading up the Tech Prep initiative rather than those involved in the traditional vocational education area.

Although the vocational education reforms first came into Oakfield shortly after the essential school work had begun, no connection was made between the two reform

initiatives. This may be due in part to the fact that in the first three years of its existence at Oakfield, the vocational education reforms languished, largely due to uninspired leadership that made little effort to develop a viable program or secure available funds. The vocational education program chugged along, continuing to do those things it had always done in much the same way they had always been done. Career exploration and information remained the sole province of the school guidance counselor. Technology, such as it was, was limited to a computer in the library and one in the main office for administrative purposes. By the end of 1994, Oakfield was in imminent danger of losing even its meager vocational education reform funds, largely because no viable business partnership had been established.

This changed in 1995 with the appointment of two new co-coordinators for the Tech Prep program, both of whom are academic area (English and math) teachers. These dynamic women breathed new life into Tech Prep through their energy and organization. Within the space of one year, the two teachers had pulled together a business partnership arrangement for the school that encompassed all business and commercial enterprises in Oakfield; obtained a substantial increase in funding; and put together a comprehensive and lengthy program proposal for a Tech Prep/Education to Careers Program (TP/ECP), encompassing no less than 16 component areas. For each of the 16 areas, an action plan was developed that noted the foundations already in place, outlined the action steps necessary "to provide Oakfield students with skills and knowledge necessary for today's technological careers," and designated "the person or persons responsible for implementing each step and evaluating it." Briefly, these 16 program components included (1) selection of a career pathway; (2) identification of key players; (3) recruitment of business/industry/labor; (4) identification of basic issues; (5) recruitment and selection of students; (6) support and retention of students; (7) evaluation of students; (8) articulated course sequences and integrated curriculum; (9) role of parents; (10) staff development; (11) selection, training, and follow-up of mentors; (12) program evaluation; (13) student incentives and recognition; (14) articulation and postsecondary; (15) work-site activities which correlate to school-based learning activities; and (16) integration of a TP/ECP into essential school programs.

The last of these component areas is especially interesting as it specifically addressed the integration of TP/ECP into the essential school program. In it, the Oakfield Tech Prep Team noted, "The Tech Prep/Education to Careers Program and the essential

school program are based on similar foundations. The TP/ECP will enhance our essential school program. . . . It is really difficult to separate the essential school program and the Tech Prep/Education to Careers Program since both programs share many of the same goals; therefore, it will be imperative that both programs work together very closely toward the common goal of preparing the OHS graduate for the future." The proposal goes on to note specific areas of TP/ECP that would overlap with or fit into the larger essential school program (see Appendix A).

While the faculty are clearly supportive and appreciative of the work, the two coordinators have done to get the Tech Prep initiative off the ground, it must be kept in mind that Oakfield is a small school characterized first and foremost by strong social and personal ties among its faculty. Everyone assumes multiple responsibilities. In the larger picture, being Tech Prep coordinators and revitalizing this initiative is secondary to being Linda and Susan (pseudonyms). Thus, the sudden flurry of activity surrounding Tech Prep had no substantive impact on the relative importance of or regard for Tech Prep within the school.

There are several reasons for the relatively recent attempts at documenting a relationship and solidifying linkages between the essential school initiative and vocational education reforms. Clearly, the initiative for this interaction rested with the newly appointed Tech Prep coordinators, not with the essential school team. Until the appointment of these two academic area teachers as Tech Prep coordinators in 1995, no teacher with primary affiliation with vocational education or Tech Prep had ever been a member of the Essential School Steering Committee. This was in a school wherein the total physical expanse from one end to the other can be traversed in under one minute; where there is a grand total of twenty-two FTE in the high school; and where many teachers have crossdiscipline teaching responsibilities, which, in turn, blurs departmental affiliations. Thus, smallness in faculty size alone clearly did not guarantee linkages between programs. It took the active initiative of two newly appointed Tech Prep coordinators to get the ball rolling.

The development of the "Oakfield Graduate" by the Essential School Steering Committee and its approval by the Board of Education also appears to have been a seminal event. Although ambiguous and loosely worded, the document became the organizing point and served as a means for Tech Prep to make the first tenuous connections to the essential school changes. For example, in the 1995-1996 school year, each Tuesday homeroom

period was devoted to TP/ECP activities devised by the coordinators. More familiarly known as "Tech Prep Tuesday," these activities revolved primarily around career exploration activities. As well, the development of a career paper became part of the 11th grade English requirements. Serendipitously, all students take exactly the same four years of English coursework.

Along with this, there has been some mingling of funds from both essential school monies and Tech Prep grants in the development of computer technology for the school. It is clearly in this area that one of the strongest linkages between the two reform initiatives exist, although there is not full agreement about the exact composition or extent of these relationships. The principal saw the connections as being fairly evident and strong. "In putting technology [computers] into the building, my contention was that every class is Tech Prep. We have software applications across all the subject areas. . . . So the technology piece is emphasized more than anything else and has a direct tie into the essential school piece. For the rural community, the old vocational education is still important. But we're looking to the future, to job shadowing via the Internet." A former coordinator for the essential school effort was less enthusiastic, less certain: "Is there a connection between the essential school initiative and Tech Prep? Tech Prep believes there is. If there is one, I guess its the technology"—and, one may add, not in any real integration of the academic and vocational education areas.

In early 1996, the by-laws of the Oakfield Essential School Steering Committee were amended to be more inclusive in general and to specifically include Tech Prep membership: "Membership will now be selected from the respective departments. Two teachers will be nominated from each of these areas. One teacher will be selected from each of the following departments: VocEd/SpEd, Language Arts, Math/Science, Fine Arts/ Foreign Language, and Social Studies/PE/Health. If none of the above is a member of the Tech Prep Team, then a Tech Prep Team member will be selected for membership on this committee." [Note: The reader will likely be struck by the fact that vocational education is paired with special education in Oakfield's departmental arrangements. However, of even greater interest is the fact that no one at Oakfield seems to attach any significance whatsoever to this. When contacted specifically about this, most respondents expressed genuine confusion as to any reason for concern, including the vocational teachers. The respondents felt that this arrangement was a simple matter of convenience rather than one motivated by any nefarious intent.] If still lacking the necessary substance, at least the

structures seem to be in place for the development of interaction and stronger linkages between the essential school initiative and Tech Prep reforms and, by proxy, the traditional vocational education program.

Conclusions

There are several conclusions that can be drawn from examining the essential school effort and the Tech Prep initiative at Oakfield High School. On the surface, it would seem that if any school is likely to have the potential for bringing together the two worlds of the academic and vocational (Little, 1993) in a systemic reform effort it should be Oakfield. The relative perceived importance and status of the vocational program (especially the historic importance of the agricultural strand) in the school, the smallness of the staff, and a concomitant lack of strong departmental affiliations, should provide especially fertile ground for such a union. Yet, affiliation and collaboration between the vocational/Tech Prep and academic/essential school pieces are riddled by internal paradoxes and external contingencies that served to keep these distanced and separate. It should be noted that while these conclusions are discussed separately, they are inherently interrelated and interconnected. In the final analysis, none stands by itself.

Small Is Better?

A small faculty in close physical proximity to each other and with numerous overlapping curricular responsibilities that cross department lines should clearly be an enabling factor for establishing conditions favorable to integrating academic and vocational areas. The faculty themselves see little difference or separation based on department affiliations. As one teacher noted, "We're a small school and a small faculty. As a faculty, we never thought of ourselves as being Tech Prep, academic, or vocational. . . . In terms of the school itself, I don't think that any of us see that this group of teachers over here is vocational; this group is academic. It all mingles. There never has been any difference." Another added, "There are three teachers in one department [and] that's the largest. So we have crossover in both students and teachers between vocational and academic courses. There are a number of courses that we allow students to put into more than one category. So, for example, communications can be used to meet a voc tech requirement or fine arts."

Because of its small size, Oakfield saw itself as a whole with no more than artificial department designations. As far as social cohesion is concerned, this lack of distinction appears to hold true. Several teachers noted that when one teacher became seriously ill, other teachers from across the school volunteered to give him some of their accumulated "sick days" so he wouldn't lose any pay. Yet traditional subject area divisions and prejudices appear to remain as a sub rosa factor when looking for interactions and collaborative actions between the essential school changes and vocational education reforms.

In spite of the tight social cohesion that binds the teachers as a whole, the essential school changes and the Tech Prep initiative seem to have gravitated toward and become the responsibility of different segments of the faculty. As the essential school coordinator noted, "I see the two as being pretty separate. I don't know exactly why. I certainly wouldn't characterize our teachers as being academic, or vocational or Tech Prep. But there is a difference between the Tech Prep [inclusive use of the term] people and essential school people. Even though I share the same classroom with Linda [one of the Tech Prep coordinators], we don't talk about coordinating the two. They just seem separate." Another content area teacher saw the Tech Prep initiatives as less than successful attempts to bridge the gap between vocational education and essential school ideas, that is, the academic strand: "Basically, essential school and voc tech [the vocational education reforms, i.e., Tech Prep] coexist as parallel lines with some bridges between them, like the Tech Prep requirement for a career paper in junior English. But I can't see that these bridges are either intellectually rigorous or represent authentic work." While social cohesion is undoubtedly strong among the faculty, subject area orientation and the subtle status differences it engenders, exist to the extent that essential school ideas are seen as far removed from any substantive involvement in vocational education/Tech Prep or vice versa.

Separate, and Not Equal

Part of the reason for this separation of essential school ideas from the vocational education reforms resides in the earliest interpretations of Coalition philosophy. As one of the teachers involved with the Essential School Steering Committee from its inception noted, "Essential school focuses more on academic areas. We looked at the nine common principles and thought we were talking about kids using their minds well. Kids using their minds well is automatically associated with the academic areas. I guess the more social and

affective aspects of essential school programs, like personalization and a tone of decency, are more on the Tech Prep [inclusive term] side." Another teacher noted, "As the essential school program developed, voc tech was included and written into the "Oakfield Graduate" document. They were involved, but it was never focused on them by any means. It was always pretty much an academic impetus from the very start." The assumption appears to have been that, like everything else in the traditional curriculum, vocational education "fit" somewhere in the essential school design. Again, this recalls Oakfield CUSD's early reiteration of the principle #9 in 1991, "A concerted effort will be made to retain all possible course offerings . . ."

This confusion over what constitutes the "turf" of essential school programs versus the vocational education reforms is prevalent among academic area teachers. It seems that early on, lines, even if informally, were drawn, and they remain very much in place: "There isn't a gulf here between academic and vocational teachers, but there is in the programs. You don't see such intellectual rigor or high standards in the Tech Prep or voc ed programs." This is echoed by a telling comment from another teacher who noted, "Anything that deals with the curriculum or instructional issues is pretty much essential school ground. Tech Prep and voc ed deal with—well, I'm not sure what they deal with but it's not essential school stuff." Finally, another teacher noted, "There was clear ownership of what essential school programs owned and what Tech Prep owned. Essential school programs deal with all the staff development and curriculum work. Tech Prep buys most of the technology hardware."

This perception is not limited to academic area teachers. Vocational education teachers and the Tech Prep program coordinators felt it as well. As one of the Tech Prep coordinators noted, "Well, it's up to us, isn't it? We don't have the standing that the essential school program does. They defined the "Oakfield Graduate" so now it's up to us to find ways to link with them. We've managed to get approval (from the Board of Education) to put a Tech Prep accreditation on students' transcripts. It doesn't really mean anything, and it's not much, but there is not much we can do besides document participation." One of the vocational area teachers added, "I never felt any real interest in getting involved in essential school work. It just didn't seem to have anything to do with me really. For the first three years no one could tell what they were doing anyway. They didn't know either, but the focus always was an academic focus. The original nine common principles were pretty academically focused." In short, it appears that the issue of

whole school change was clearly owned by the essential school reform. Tech Prep and vocational education reform was viewed, at best, as being, in the words of one of the Tech Prep coordinators, to "enhance our essential school program."

The early perception of the academic orientation of the essential school program was reinforced by the external organizations associated with the essential school movement. At the Coalition level stood a prestigious, Ivy League institution, Brown University, and a nationally renowned education philosopher, Ted Sizer. At the state level, the Alliance organization was closely associated with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, the flagship university of the state. The imagery was overpowering. The message Oakfield read seemed crystal clear—essential school reform dealt with academic-centered concerns. One respondent put it well: "I've never thought about the Alliance or the Coalition in terms of Tech Prep or vocational education. When I look at the Alliance I see the University of Illinois and Brown. That's a long way from Tech Prep and vocational education. They're associated with the local Tech Prep consortium, trade schools, and community colleges." Another respondent added, "It's like you have parallel organizations. Here's the Alliance with its coordinators, programs, and funding. Then, over here, is Tech Prep with its own coordinators, programs, and funding. They are basically separate from each other. They have separate meetings, separate concerns, separate funds." It seems not unusual, then, that Oakfield was not able to bring together what they saw as two quite distinct initiatives.

Essential Versus Nonessential

An implicit understanding at Oakfield (and other Alliance schools) seems to revolve around the idea that if something is designated as essential, something else must be nonessential. Even at Oakfield, with its strong vocational orientation, the invective of "nonessential" fell most heavily on voc ed programs. As one of the respondents noted, "The intellectual focus [of essential school programs] seemed at odds with voc tech programs. It seemed to make these nonessential. Of course, that did not happen here. Maybe because we are a rural school, and farming is a widely respected vocation. These kinds of classes are not fringy."

Added to the dilemma of being perceived as "nonessential," vocational education faced additional credibility challenges from the state level. The state-identified learning

goals do not include any direct reference to vocational education, nor does the state-mandated testing program, the Illinois Goal Assessment Program (IGAP). As one vocational education teacher noted, "The state goals do not include voc tech, and this made everyone in those areas extremely nervous. The state-level organizations and even the national ones (in vocational education) did put some pressure on the state to include them. But they never did in the same format that they did the other six learning areas that were identified." In essence, the state was sending the same message to voc tech areas, questioning their relevance and centrality in education.

This spurred the impetus for vocational education teachers to attempt at least limited involvement with essential school changes. As the principal noted, "I told them that it was up to them. It was clear that they [the vocational education teachers] in those areas that were not covered by the six fundamental learning areas would have to be able to show how their curriculum content meets the existing goals. Basically, they were afraid that if they didn't show up and demonstrate how they help to meet those identified outcomes, they were going to disappear." Much the same appears to be true in regards to the "Oakfield Graduate" document.

The effect of the identification of state learning goals was to reinforce the academic areas, already closely associated with the essential school ideas, as the center of the universe in secondary education and to further marginalize vocational education. In essence, this state action endorsed the existing proclivity of the essential school initiative to be seen as academically centered in the traditional understandings of academic courses and offered little incentive or reason to take a more embracing stance toward inclusion of and affiliation with vocational education areas. The principal put it as well as anyone:

> Quality Review, IGAP, and the state School Improvement effort all still ignore vocational education and Tech Prep kinds of issues. There's no requirement to report anything on these areas in your school report card, so I'm sure that most [schools] don't. The light still shines on the academic core. With IGAP, there is nothing beyond measurement of those academic areas. All the high stakes tests we as a school get evaluated on, mandated to do, and judged on from the State Board don't touch the voc ed or Tech Prep world.

Sweet Serendipity

It seems clear that the connections that do exist between the academic/essential school efforts at Oakfield and the vocational education/Tech Prep reforms are, for the most part, unplanned, serendipitous occurrences. While there are some activities that bridge across, for the most part these are not by deliberate design. As one teacher noted, "I don't think there were ever any planned connections between the two. No one was looking for these connections. Now there is some overlap of membership on both committees [essential school and Tech Prep], but serendipity probably describes it better than anything else."

These bridges exist largely because of the perceived strength and importance of the vocational education program at Oakfield. Comprising a reasonable proportion of students and because of the overwhelmingly strong social bonds between teachers, they will not be ignored. Nonetheless, a largely second-class status for vocational education undergirds implicit assumptions by both sides and is reinforced by policies of powerful external state and national agencies.

Summary

In this case at least, the relationship between essential school reform and vocational education reform seems fairly clear. Essential school reform was the dominant, driving force in the school and vocational education reforms as well as vocational education were placed in a position of attempting to "fit" into the larger change agenda. The responsibility for finding this "fit" clearly rested with the Tech Prep coordinators and, to a lesser extent, with the vocational education teachers.

There are likely several reasons for the differential status accorded to the two reforms. First, and most simply, essential school reform was there first. Even with its rocky start at the school, the essential school ideas of whole-school change had some form, substance, and momentum by the time the vocational education reforms arrived on the scene. Second, for whatever reason, there is an innate appeal and status accorded to reforms seen as "academic." Essential school reform had this aura for a variety of reasons; the vocational reforms did not. No matter how unreasonable or unjustifiable, in the pecking order of traditional, comprehensive high schools, anything carrying a "vocational" label is,

to greater or lesser extents, still stigmatized and marginalized—somehow removed from the central core concerns of secondary education. Third, and closely connected to the preceding, the vocational education reforms did not garner the understanding, let alone interest, of the majority of staff at the school. This is clearly evidenced in numerous examples. It is illustrated in the loose and even at times inaccurate uses of the terminology, like "Tech Prep," by influentials in the school. For the principal, Tech Prep is computer technology in the classrooms. When asked what Tech Prep is concerned with, one of the essential school participants was completely stymied for a response. Another essential school coordinator shares a classroom with the Tech Prep coordinator, but they never discuss the two initiatives they respectively head up. At best, in most of the respondents' minds, there is a vague association that links Tech Prep with traditional vocational education and, thus, something largely unconnected with them.

EDGEWATER CASE STUDY

Findings

Context

Edgewater High School in many ways meets and even exceeds all the preconceived images and notions of a typical wealthy, suburban high school. Located in affluent Devon County, approximately 30 miles west of a major urban city, Edgewater High School is divided between separate campuses—with East Campus housing grades 9 and 10 and West Campus housing grades 11 and 12—and serves a total of nearly 2,800 students. The High School District serves several affluent communities in northern Devon County. According to the Edgewater High School District, teachers averaged 16.3 years of experience and $55,000 in annual salary districtwide in 1995. Both figures are well above state averages and likely contribute to each other. Approximately 81% of the teachers have at least a master's degree; several hold doctorates.

Of its 2,800 students, just over 2% were reported as low income by the Edgewater High School District in 1995 and less than 1% were classified as LEP. The overwhelming majority of the student population is white at just over 87%, less than 2% are African American, under 4% are Hispanic, with the remainder listed as Asian/Pacific Islander. Over 60% of the Class of 1996 took the ACT with a composite score 22.8, and over the past five

years the graduation rate has been consistently maintained at approximately 95%. Over 70% (and inching upward) of the students report being in a college preparatory program with the remainder in a vocational or general education sequence.

For the most part, the East Campus is the focus of this study as this is where nearly all of the essential school activity and involvement has been located and, thus, this building will be referred to as Edgewater High School in this report. The drive to Edgewater (East Campus) is impressive in itself as the route follows the street that parallels a good deal of the rolling expanse of the exclusive and nationally recognized Medicina Country Club. On one side of the street is the Medicina Country Club; on the other, Edgewater High School.

The physical plant of the high school is impressive in several respects. The sheer size is impressive as is the upkeep—fully carpeted, no litter, and no graffiti. One of the first stops on the school tour for visitors is in the main entrance hall where one wall is lined with pictures of distinguished Edgewater alumni—former graduates who have distinguished themselves in assorted careers from the theater and the arts, to engineering and science, to finance and business. All the pictured illuminaries are high-profile, college-educated individuals. Privilege and entitlement emanate from the whole display. In addition to the traditional array of secondary classrooms, the school houses a fairly large theater capable of seating 500, which, with spiraling enrollments, is barely adequate for present demands and will be undergoing a major renovation and expansion project starting in the summer of 1997. Significantly, the entire vocational education area underwent a major renovation in 1992 and reopened as the Applied Technology Center (ATC), an area comprising nearly 12,000 square feet of laboratory and classroom space. During the renovation, all of the old woods, metals, auto, and electricity shops were removed. The ATC now houses technology-based areas including a technology (computer) lab, an audio/video production studio, a multimedia presentation room, a communications lab, a transportation/automotive systems lab, and a manufacturing production lab. The latter two are basically updated auto and wood shops. In spite of these lush settings, there are currently serious problems with the ATC. Approximately 10% of the teaching staff have assignments in the ATC. Less than 25% of the Edgewater students have ever been involved in any way with the renovated ATC area, and the number is quickly sliding to 20% with no sign of stopping there. This is in spite of a dramatic and consistent increase in overall school enrollment over the past years. On more than one visit to this area, doors had to be unlocked and lights turned on.

In a school that simply does not have enough space to put all of its students, this is a telling indicator of the current status of the vocational education program.

The reasons for this decline are multifaceted but clearly link to the larger community. Like Oakfield, Edgewater is highly tuned to its community's expectations for its schools, and it is abundantly clear that the community expects a heavy emphasis on a college preparatory curriculum. For all teachers and administrators interviewed for this study, this was and is a paramount fact that shapes the choices they make and the programs they institute: "It all comes down to the parents and the community. They like what we do here. They see a good school that is functioning well. It's difficult to make big changes when everyone is behind what is already in place, and we have always been college prep oriented." The parents in this affluent and upwardly mobile community have a clear, almost singular, vision for their children that includes a quality college or university education, if not immediately upon graduation, then shortly thereafter. This means that they also have a clear and fairly singular view of what Edgewater High School's curricular offerings and instructional programs should look like and what the high school should offer. This has had a profound influence on the essential school reforms as well as on the vocational education initiatives in the school.

Essential Schools and Edgewater

From its entry into the Alliance, Edgewater was always different from the other member schools; not just different in the way that all schools have important differences from each other, but a "distinct" kind of difference. Of the original ten member schools, Edgewater was the only suburban candidate school. Compared to nearly any school, but especially to the other Alliance downstate schools, Edgewater enjoyed an enviable position. The school was and is successful by every recognized measure. IGAP scores as well as other standardized measures were consistently high. In fact, ACT scores placed Edgewater in the top 10% nationally. The school enjoyed the warm and enthusiastic support of its community. Finances were not a serious problem so budgetary battles over a new initiative would not be an impediment. Over the years, Edgewater has been able to attract an exceptionally able faculty and has had a stable administration. (The principal is a prime example. Now in his 27th year at Edgewater, this individual has risen through the ranks, starting first as a social studies teacher, then department chair, then assistant principal, and since 1994, the East Campus principal.)

Compared to the other schools in the Alliance, Edgewater looked like an exceptional candidate. While most of the other Alliance schools were drawn into the effort by the lure of additional funding, Edgewater had ample resources. It had a gifted faculty out to maintain a cutting edge presence in the highly competitive world of suburban education. The essential school initiative had union backing that eased its entrance into the school, and this alone was a highly contentious issue in the other schools. In the early days, at least, it looked like Edgewater would not have to fight through a lot of the battles the other member schools would have to and did. Thus, by comparison to the other member schools, Edgewater looked promising. If anyplace, Edgewater should have provided a prime field for essential school ideas. Yet, this was far from the case.

Edgewater's initial contact with the Alliance came just before a brief but extremely bitter teacher strike in early 1989. One of the key issues for the teachers' union concerned what they viewed as heavy-handed administrative actions. As one of the teachers noted,

> This was a real rocky time period in our district. We had the strike, and there were hard feelings all around. Everyone was pretty bitter. We [the teachers] felt like we were being pulled from one thing into another. Whatever bandwagon came down the road, the administration wanted us to jump on it. When individualized instruction was big, we got involved. When responsive education was big, we got involved. When values education was big, we got involved. There was never any option. It was all by administrative fiat." An Alliance cadre member who had visited the school on several occasions commented, "They had a major labor problem, and there was a lot of distrust. The principal did not trust the superintendent. The teachers were bitter and angry. They felt they could trust the principal more than the superintendent, but there was something between them and the principal as well.

Given these circumstances, the decision to look at Alliance membership and another round of possible changes may seem a bit incongruous. However, in this case, the school, and in particular the union leadership of the school, was prompted to do so by the then president of the Illinois Education Association (IEA), who was also a member of the Alliance cadre. Having worked closely with the Edgewater Education Association (EEA) over the years and especially during the strike, the IEA president convinced them that this was an opportunity not only to take control of a reform initiative themselves but also an opportunity to hold the administration's feet to the fire. As the then interim director noted, "I think she [the IEA President] saw some potential with essential school ideas and wanted to give it a test in a controlled environment, one where she had confidence in the teachers'

union. At Edgewater, the essential school initiative basically turned out to be a straw man. They knew that the superintendent who was there was pushing for this as the next big thing he could do, but they were going to make sure they controlled it. The whole idea of the essential school program depends on collaboration, but the idea of collaboration was seen as a threat to the union." While clearly Edgewater's motives for membership in the Alliance were hardly driven by a fervor for the nine common principles, it must be kept in mind that there were always multiple reasons for schools accepting Coalition/Alliance membership. Some of them were, inevitably, less than noble.

At Edgewater, the essential school issue became a bargaining chip for the union in dealing with the administration during the immediate post-strike years. Both sides finally hammered out an agreement couched in terse labor/management language that specified exactly what the union leadership had originally proposed for their essential school effort—a small and entirely voluntary pilot program in grade 9. Particularly important to the union was a contingent agreement that no teachers outside of the pilot program would be expected or required to participate in essential school activities nor would any special exemptions or concessions be given to those who did choose to participate. The pilot program itself followed a classic school-within-a-school (SWIS) design, with five core academic teachers responsible for 110 students who were block scheduled for these classes. All the teachers involved volunteered for the assignment. Students were to be selected randomly, although from within a constricted and bounded population with both high-level and low-level students excluded. As the principal explained,

> We select from a pool of students who meet a set of characteristics. If they are below intro level algebra, they will not be in. Or if they are above algebra and ready for geometry, they won't be in. If they have an elective that meets during that block of time, then they will not be in the pool for the essential school program. Then, there are parents who do not want their children to be in a group program like this. They feel that they won't ever see anyone else or never make a new friend. So they don't want them in there." From its inception, the essential school pilot program never drew more than 110 students and, in recent years, this number has declined considerably as the eligible candidate pool has shrunk.

According to program evaluations done by Alliance personnel, across the years, little effort was ever made to extend the program beyond the parameters of the original SWIS model. It was noted in a 1990 report that,

> The Steering Committee is operating within narrow constraints and consists of the EEA president, one teacher, the principal, an assistant principal, and the Alliance coach. Perhaps connected with the strike, there is a 'we-they' feeling to all interactions. . . . By the design of the Steering Committee, there has been no open invitation for all faculty to be involved. Some faculty members feel information is channeled carefully, even secretly. Workshop and conference information is not shared, and some faculty feel deliberately excluded from all facets of the process.

The former interim director of the Alliance added,

> From my interaction with the school, I predicted that they would have a hard time getting out that little school-within-a-school. I was very disappointed with that model. But it was a union move. It's now this little isolated program inside of Edgewater. It's not going to get any bigger. It's never going to influence the school. It's been encapsulated inside of a shell. It was perceived as a threat, so they sealed it off.

With little change apparently on the horizon, in late 1991 the Alliance coordinator, wrote to the Steering Committee expressing his concerns. Specifically, the state coordinator cited three areas of concern to him and the Alliance cadre. First, the school had provided "no indication that the essential school program will grow from its past and current scope and size. . . ." Second, there were questions about the level of commitment from both faculty and community for essential school efforts. As noted by the state coordinator, "The Steering Committee is not representative of a broad spectrum of the school. . . ." Finally, concerns were raised about the school's budget requests by the state coordinator in December 1991: "It is not readily apparent how activities for which money is allocated reflect efforts to expand the program into the rest of the school. The fact that the bulk of the expenditures ($35,000) is for only five individuals adds to these concerns."

Unlike the conciliatory missive received from Oakfield in response to a similar query, the Edgewater's "specific and considered responses" to these questions is almost aggressive, and certainly defiant. Edgewater responded to the first area of concern in January of 1992 with a letter, signed only by the principal and EEA president, noting that, "The Steering Committee and staff view the pilot program as an *initial three-year* [emphasis added] effort. During this three-year period, the existing pilot would continue as begun. . . . Plans to implement the pilot program into the tenth grade will be reviewed for year four. . . ." As well, the letter noted that the Steering Committee had increased in size and now included the EEA president, three teachers, and four building administrators plus the Alliance coach. The letter concludes noting, "A goal of the Steering Committee has been for

involvement in the essential school program to be teacher-initiated not administrator-initiated. . . . [It was] stipulated that all teachers would have the opportunity to participate in, plan for, and/or teach in the essential school program. Our commitment, however, has been for this participation to be voluntary."

For all intents and purposes, this ended the matter. The Alliance showed no further interest in prodding Edgewater to make more significant changes; Edgewater clearly was not about to move beyond the grade 9 SWIS originally implemented. Rather than lose a powerful and influential member school and possibly incur the wrath of the IEA president and the Alliance cadre member, the state coordinator basically conceded defeat in a letter to Edgewater in February 1992, noting contritely, "you gave us new understanding of the difficulties involved in changing a successful large suburban school. I know that most of our doubts regarding your program were clarified. Indeed, the Cadre has instructed me to release all pending funding for your school."

Not surprisingly, year four came and went with no expansion of the essential school program into grade 10. Last year, the Steering Committee was officially dissolved. As the last teacher-coordinator noted, "Many people were getting committeed out. And I just thought it was one more committee. We still hold ourselves as an ad hoc group, so whenever something needs to be discussed we can be called together. I am now a representative on the district's Curriculum Council, so if someone has an essential school proposal they want to forward, they can bring it to me and I take it to the Council." Along with the dissolution of the Steering Committee, all indications are that this year will be the last one for the grade 9 essential school project. As one of the teachers explained,

> One of our big problems right now is that we [Edgewater] have a mushrooming population. We are filled to the brim. But the actual enrollment in the [essential school] program has been going down. . . . It was a union agreement that brought it in, and now the classes are smaller than classes throughout the school. When it [essential school] was voted in, it was voted in with that caveat that it doesn't adversely affect other classes. And this year, we can say it does. So I feel that the program itself is in serious jeopardy." Interestingly, though, there appears to be little distress about this. While the five core academic teachers seem to have genuinely enjoyed their experience, the pervasive feeling is that it is time to move on to something else. As one commented, "I don't think it will last beyond this year. But if it evolves into something different, that may be the best thing. It may allow some other things to happen.

Vocational Education, Tech Prep, and Essential School Programs

Almost in diametric opposition to Oakfield, vocational education at Edgewater has always been perceived by the majority of staff as largely marginal to the more central mission of the school that is clearly oriented to preparing students for college. This is not surprising given the affluent, suburban location of Edgewater and the aspirations and expectations of the community that it serves. In spite of the, as one respondent noted, "incredible facilities" of the renovated ATC, this area of the school and its curriculum remain on the fringe of where the action really is. After numerous visits to the school, the ATC was consistently the one relatively quiet, uncrowded, and underused area in a school otherwise bursting at the seams with students, activity, and the need for space. More telling, building administrators and core academic teachers consistently referred to the ATC as "down there" and had only the vaguest ideas of what was happening "down there" in either instruction or curriculum. When asked about the instructional program, one building administrator noted, "Our courses down there follow the Tech Prep model, [Researcher: 'What is that?'] Well, as I understand it, there is a curriculum that Tech Prep has established. I'm not sure what it's all about, but our curriculum is designed along the models that Tech Prep has espoused."

The ATC renovation project, as impressive as it is, may be more the result of the affluence of a district whose plans need not be curtailed by fiscal constraints and which feels a pressing need to maintain an edge over other competing suburban schools than a deep commitment to vocational education or vocational education reforms. Especially at the East Campus, the vocational education classes and Tech Prep program is limited by other structural and organizational factors. Tech Prep exists primarily on paper, as students considered Tech Prep at East Campus are simply those enrolled in any of the vocational classes offered in the ATC.

A primary reason for this is that students have prescribed course requirements in grades 9 and 10 that offer little room for electives of any kind. Course discretion is exceptionally limited, in stark contrast to the West Campus that houses grades 11 and 12. As one teacher added, "Students have to take two years of math, two years of science, two years of English, and one year of social studies (a world history class usually taken one semester in the freshman year and the other semester in the sophomore year). If they take a foreign language and one study hall and two years of PE, that doesn't leave them any time for many electives." As one ATC teacher noted, "With the core curriculum our kids have to

take, they have a max of three semesters of Tech Prep here. There's something wrong with the way we are set up because they get all kinds of electives when they go to West Campus." Thus, beyond the curriculum in courses specifically located in the ATC, the Tech Prep experience offered students at East Campus is largely nonexistent. The general education requirements hold for all students—two years of English, math, and science and one year of social studies. However, the options available to students for meeting these requirements is mindboggling. In the most extreme example, there are no less than nine different math "tracks" available, all with their own course titles and curricula. Every possible synonym for "applied," "general," and "advanced" appear to have been used.

[As a quick aside and in fairness, this situation does change dramatically once students reach West Campus. West Campus has close linkages with the Davea Career Center, the local vocational center. Typically, students involved with this program spend approximately a half day at school and a half day at the center. Multiple program areas are available for students and, upon completion, the student receives a vocational certificate. There is also an articulation agreement with the College of Devon, the local community college, through which students may receive credit for business education and industrial technology courses offered exclusively at West Campus. Nevertheless, "honors" and AP (Advanced Placement) classes still clearly outnumber these combined offerings.]

Given the lack of centrality, importance, or opportunity of vocational education at Edgewater's East Campus, it is a curiosity that early on in 1988 while exploring possible membership in the Alliance, vocational education became an issue that moved to the forefront of Edgewater's concerns. As the former interim director of the Alliance recalled,

> The vocational issue and where voc tech fit with essential school programs was an issue for most of the schools. Back then the issue of losing faculty was a big issue, especially at some schools . . . or any other district with labor difficulties. But usually the vocational education issue was limited and easily addressed. The only concerted effort to study it was at Edgewater. At other schools, it was never a specific subtopic but only one of many issues that came up.

This last piece is important. Compared to the other Alliance schools, only Edgewater carried the vocational education issue as far as it did. For the others, it was most often a single question raised early on, but that was the end of it.

In his role of assisting or "coaching" Edgewater through the exploration phase of candidacy leading to Alliance membership, the interim director took seriously their concerns about the role of vocational education and initiated a series of conversations with various individuals at the Coalition to get a sense of their stance on this issue. (The length of the following quotation will hopefully be excused by its saliency. It may well represent the only substantive report of the Coalition's early stance on vocational education outside of a few scattered and shallow references in *Horace's Compromise* [Sizer, 1984].):

> I talked with [Bob] McCarthy about it and I talked with Sus. ר Lusi about it. At the very beginning, the Coalition was a shoestring operation. McCarthy had just come on two months before me. It was basically Ted and Grant Wiggins and a bunch of kids just out of Brown and Susan Lusi was one of those. She was working on the Methos project and I called her up and we had a nice long conversation about this. And then I called Ted and we talked about this as well. I'm not sure I know what the early Coalition line was on this but I know what I got out of those two conversations. What I understood from those two conversations was the purpose of the Coalition was to teach kids to use their minds well and to teach to depth of understanding. And that there was nothing in the basic nature of a vocational curriculum that would prevent you from doing this. In fact, there were some excellent examples of vocational schools that were highly proficient in that high caliber education using that kind of vocational thing. There was some conversation of German schooling and the kinds of learning being done in factories rather than remaining in schools. They [Sizer and Lusi] were open on the question. They did not see any reason why an essential school could not include vocational education because the test of an essential school is not whether you teach vocations or not, it's all those things in the nine common principles.

Clearly intrigued and engaged with these ideas, the interim director sent a memo to the Edgewater principal and EEA president outlining a rigorous activity he devised for a study group at Edgewater to use to guide their explorations of this issue (see Appendix B). Notably within this document prepared in 1988, the interim director discussed his interpretation of some of the more philosophical dilemmas confronting the essential school concept and its relationship to vocational education:

> It seems to me that our difficulty comes from defining the problem in the wrong way. We fall into the trap of thinking about curriculum as we always have. That is, when we consider curricular issues, we just naturally think in terms of subject areas. Thus, when we think of simplifying course offerings, we naturally think of eliminating content disciplines. This combines in our minds with a common perception that Vocational Education is not a core discipline. It is a small jump to the conclusion that vocational programs are inevitably doomed unless we can somehow make them more "core-like" . . . . On the other hand, the foundation of the essential school is

> its intellectual focus. However, we must be careful here: Intellectual focus does *not* mean prodigious mastery of traditional subject disciplines. It *does* mean that all which happens in an essential school must contribute to training students to use their minds well. . . . [T]he inherent value of Vocational Education is not necessarily lower than that of the other disciplines; the relative importance of all must be determined within the context of each school. Thus, we can stop apologetically trying to justify vocational courses by shoehorning in a few elements of "important" subjects. Instead, we must work to assure that the learnings gained in all courses articulate the school's intellectual purpose.

For Edgewater, however, the salient issues did not concern the philosophic dimensions of essential school ideas and their intersection with vocational education, but the more pragmatic concern about the preservation of jobs. Not surprisingly, Edgewater never responded to exercises dealing with the role of vocational education in an essential school, and the whole issue simply vanished from the horizon. (At present, this whole issue is barely recalled by the Edgewater participants. It was for them a minor issue, raised by the union for other ends.) As devised by the union, Edgewater's essential school pilot project had no connection to or involvement with the vocational education or the vocational education reforms. For them, essential school ideas focused only on a small group of volunteers from core academic areas. Vocational education never surfaced again in conjunction with the essential school reform, nor were there any further attempts to connect the essential school effort to the existing vocational education program or Tech Prep reforms.

Conclusions

Especially in counterpoint to Oakfield, the Edgewater case illustrates how radically different the same reform initiative can look in different contexts. Although bundled together under the rubric of essential schools and members of the Alliance, the two schools and their approaches to essential school changes could hardly be more different. Yet, at Edgewater, the essential school effort and vocational education reforms may share more commonalties than they did in Oakfield. Unfortunately, most of them are negative. Edgewater offers the interesting scenario of a school where both the essential school ideas and vocational education reforms have largely been marginalized and encapsulated into small, struggling programs. Neither commands either the respect or attention of anyone other than a small minority of the faculty, students, or community. Both are shrinking as

student enrollment shifts to other areas of the curriculum whether through changes in interest or structural impediments. Because of these factors, both the essential school program and the vocational education reforms continue to exist in a parched environment. The possibility of either gaining enough momentum to seize leadership for all-school change seems ridiculously remote.

In Edgewater's case, the vocational reforms would seem to be in a more viable position, if only because of the existence of a fairly well-developed (if small) extension of Tech Prep reforms at West Campus. For essential school reforms, there is nothing to connect to beyond the small encapsulated program at grade 9. While there is talk by the zealots of essential school "ideas" spreading through both campuses, this translates in reality to a few (I could find three) interdisciplinary classes—a combination of algebra and chemistry imaginatively labeled, algistry—that have sprung up. Even so, there is no evidence that essential school ideas had much of anything to do with the development of these courses. Nevertheless, there are some conclusions that can be drawn about essential school programs and vocational education reforms at Edgewater (East Campus). Once again, although discussed separately, these conclusions are highly interrelated and interconnected.

If It Ain't Broke . . .

Clearly, one of the most potent and troubling conclusions to be drawn from this case was that at Edgewater there was never any real intent to become an essential school. Nor, for that matter, was there ever any real interest in the whole school change advocated by the vocational education reforms. Harsh as it may sound, self-satisfaction rarely leads to the kind of self-reflection and criticism necessary to institute major systemic change. By every measure, Edgewater was and is a successful school, enjoying strong community support and strong approbation for its current, traditionally based programs. A vocational education offering, as one piece of this traditional picture of a comprehensive high school, fits comfortably into the background. The Coalition SWIS never did, but with abundant resources it could be maintained. As one external evaluator from the Alliance noted in 1993,

> The impression becomes one of a school not altogether convinced it needs restructuring. I can't shake the feeling that Edgewater does not think its [sic] broken. Therefore—why fix it? Early on, Edgewater talked about bringing in the essential school program because Edgewater is on the forefront of

> education, cares about its students, and is committed to providing quality education to its students. I have the feeling that Edgewater is committed to being the best possible traditional high school it can be.

These sentiments were echoed by another evaluation team in 1995: "While the pilot has had some indirect influence on practices throughout the school, the essential school movement does not pervade this building. This school offers a good example of a suburban school with high self-esteem [that is] not convinced it needs to restructure at all."

At least part of East Campus' half-hearted involvement with both essential school and vocational education reforms relates directly to the competitive, even cutthroat, environment of the suburban high school. In this environment, it is all important to retain an edge, to beat back any and all competitors in any and all arenas. For example, it is clear that Edgewater is an unwieldy size, and it would seem to make some sense to have two four-year high schools with unified programs rather than the current arrangement. This is most unlikely. As one respondent noted, "There was talk once about splitting into two high schools but that will never happen. We wouldn't be able to field the same caliber [athletic] teams or students for competitions in music, drama. No one wants to dilute that with a smaller talent pool to draw from." An administrator added, "If Carthage [a neighboring district] puts in a rugby field or adds Russian to its foreign language offerings, you can bet we will too. It's not unheard of here for parents just to pick up and move to another district that they think offers better opportunities. The pressure is always on, and we've got to respond."

For Edgewater, membership in the Coalition and Alliance was a prestige move, a means of distinguishing itself from other neighboring high schools, a means of demonstrating to its ever vigilant (and quick to criticize) public that it was at the forefront of educational innovation. The content of the ideas was not that important; the school was already adjudged wildly successful by every measure. It was the direct association and affiliation with Brown, Sizer, and the University of Illinois that was of significance. As with the portraits of distinguished alumni in the entranceway (and making about an equal contribution to the school), Coalition membership was another trophy to be displayed—a public affirmation of the legitimacy of status quo at Edgewater. The trophy status of both the essential school initiative and vocational education is most dramatically revealed in the Edgewater's school report card document. Most school districts merely Xerox the pages of dry statistics sent from the state for public use. Not Edgewater. The document is a glossy

publication with full color pictures and multiple pages that herald the school's successes and triumphs. An entire page is devoted to Edgewater's essential school involvement, prominently highlighting the Coalition. Another page features pictures of the renovated ATC and its cutting-edge computer technology.

Community Expectations

The community at large and the parents in particular play a significant role for Edgewater. Clearly as noted above, Edgewater looks as it does and goes about its business as it does because of community expectations. As one respondent noted, "The community is everything here. Keeping the parents happy, satisfied—these are really important things that school has to attend to. The community plays an important role in this school and you can't rock the boat too much or they are going to be unhappy, and if they are unhappy, everybody's unhappy." Another teacher noted, "Parents expect that their kids are going to do well; that they are going to get accepted into the college or university of their choice. One of our most important missions is making sure this happens by providing the best possible education we can."

If community expectations are expressed in the current curriculum structures and instructional practices of Edgewater High School, then these expectations clearly focus on the traditional academic offerings of a college prep track. Overall, this has had the effect of marginalizing the essential school program and, to a lesser extent, vocational education and its reforms. As one of the ATC teachers commented, "If you walked into this school and just asked someone, 'Are you [this school] doing Tech Prep?' I don't think that many would say, 'Yes, we are.' We're isolated in many ways from the mainstream here. But that's the way it is. Parents see the new technology center and think that this is great but *my* (emphasis in original) kid is going to college."

In much the same manner, the essential school program was viewed as something less than the fast track, something less than desirable. The limited pool of students from which the program could draw contributed to this image as did the isolated and solitary nature of the singleton grade 9 program. As the principal noted,

> Any time you have a program like this, the parents get worried and start asking a lot of questions. What's it all about? What are you doing there? Is it values stuff? You get people coming out of the walls. I think that's been a challenge for the teachers and the district. In some instances, kids haven't

> had a good experience in the program. Then their parents tell others and give it a negative message. Before you know it, you've got a problem on your hands.

You Can Lead a Horse to Water But . . .

What may be most distressing in the Edgewater case overall was the loss of a sterling opportunity to explore in-depth the connections and interrelationships between vocational education and the essential school initiative. The conversation started by the group exercise could likely have been interesting and revealing. Unfortunately, it was never attempted. Although the vocational education issue was raised at other candidate schools, Edgewater had pushed it the furthest and, in the end, that was not very far. The issue was buried by the pragmatism and politics of union/management power struggles that were reverberating throughout the district. As the former interim director for the Alliance commented,

> That was the only time any of the schools I worked with really looked like it was ready to wrestle with these issues. But their understanding of the role of vocational education in the essential school [initiative] was never internalized. It was all a union flap over job security—really disappointing. The only other school that I know of who dealt with this was Chicago Vocational School (CVS) but [the State Coordinator] worked more directly with the Chicago schools than I did.

Over the years, the structural arrangement of classes and increases in the course requirements for students at Edgewater's East Campus precluded much opportunity to engage vocational electives. As one of the ATC coordinators noted, students had available a maximum of three electives over their two years at East Campus. In this tightly constrained system where degrees of freedom were minimal, vocational education courses became the big losers.

Summary

Unlike Oakfield, where the essential school reform clearly owned the agenda for whole-school change, and vocational education reform was left to try to find a way to fit into this overall picture, at Edgewater, both reforms were diminished and encapsulated by the larger dominant design of the traditional, comprehensive high school. Neither attained real viability and/or visibility beyond being used as occasional public relations vehicles for the district.

The reasons for this include all the usual impediments to schoolwide change already well-documented in the literature. The sheer size of Edgewater and its ungainly organization into separate campuses makes communication, integration, and coordination exceptionally difficult, especially for reform efforts aimed at schoolwide change. In the vocational education reforms especially, the progress and innovations that were achieved at West Campus did not translate to a significant advantage for East Campus. In fact, there was a distinct sense of separation rather than continuity between the two. As one ATC teacher at East Campus noted, "We're worlds apart. We deal with a whole different set of circumstances here. Most of our faculty [at East Campus] is close to retirement. Some who have already retired have not been replaced." While it is unlikely that the ATC will be closed, it is clear that the vocational program and vocational education reforms are not high priorities for the school, let alone the vocational education reforms.

Added to this, the school's continued success and community expectations do not augur well for any sudden upsurge of interest in these areas. Reforms advocating schoolwide change, whether essential school or vocational education reforms, would appear to stand slim hope of success in schools already adjudged to be successful and to be meeting community expectations.

CROSS-CASE CONCLUSIONS

Singularly, both of the cases presented above offer an interesting and even compelling illustration of the fate of systemic reforms as they enter the world of the traditional, comprehensive high school. However, deeper insights may be garnered from a cross-case analysis. Although on the surface the findings from the two cases seem quite disparate, there are several important points that can be drawn from looking across the two cases. While not highly generalizable, these "lessons learned" may, nevertheless, be more informative than those that rest on instances of the singularity of context and the idiosyncrasies of the local.

There are four central conclusions that I draw from looking across the two cases. The first of these concerns general issues of reform and the importance of context in change efforts for secondary schools. The second draws upon considerations of simultaneous reform efforts in schools: specifically, the essential school and vocational education reforms. The third and fourth conclusions extend the examination of essential school and vocational education reforms by focusing respectively on the continuing centrality of the academic core in secondary schools and the impact this holds for vocational education reforms.

The Difficulty of Systemic Reforms

For nearly a decade, secondary schools have been caught up in a flurry of reform and change efforts. In most cases, these reform efforts have been aimed at comprehensive, systemic changes, what Cuban (1992) calls fundamental as opposed to incremental change: "Incremental reforms are those that aim to improve the existing structures of schooling. . . . Fundamental reforms, on the other hand, are those that aim to transform and alter permanently those very same institutional structures. The premise behind fundamental reforms is that basic structures are irremediably flawed and need a complete overhaul, not renovations" (p. 228).

Clearly, the ideas embodied in the Coalition and the vocational education reforms are exemplars of reforms aimed at fundamental, whole-school change. If one point is now abundantly clear from the larger arena of literature that has examined significant school change efforts (Murphy & Hallinger, 1993; Murphy & Louis, 1994; Prestine & Stringfield,

In press), it is that such fundamental change is exceptionally difficult to accomplish. Wave after wave of reforms have crashed up on the educational shores, yet secondary schools today look much the same as they did twenty or even thirty years ago (Cuban, 1990). The number and combinations of contingencies that can adversely affect reform efforts appear to expand like galaxies spinning out into the cosmos as more empirical data from school-based research accumulates (e.g., see Bradley, 1994; Mirel, 1994; Prestine, In press; Roemer, 1991; Siskin, 1994a). In addition, singular instances of one school's success have not provided the templates for nor have they proven to be readily translatable to others (Muncey & McQuillan, 1996; Prestine, 1993). Change is never easy for an organization and appears to come only with significant struggles against fairly formidable odds (Fullan, 1993). If it were not so, replicates of Central Park East would abound and *Horace's School* (Sizer, 1992) would not have been followed by *Horace's* ***Hope*** (Sizer, 1996) [emphasis added].

Any school's attempt at systemic change enters a complex and complicated workplace context with established relationships and strong belief systems (Fullan, 1991, 1993). These "durable and stable cultural values and mind-sets" (Deal, 1990, p. 8) are critical factors for any change initiative. Both of the above cases illustrate once again the importance of local context for reform initiatives (Corbett, Firestone, & Rossman, 1987; Corbett & Rossman, 1989; Metz, 1988; Timar, 1989). In the two schools, considered both individually and collectively, there were multiple interpretations and understandings of the issues faced and the means by which to address these issues. Neither school appears to have received any kind of substantive or meaningful assistance from either affiliated state or national organizations. In essence, both were largely on their own and ended up reconstructing and retooling both reforms to meet local conditions and prevailing school cultures.

Competing or Complementary Reforms?

It seems likely that two reforms both advocating systemic, whole-school change cannot simultaneously set the agenda for change in a given school. While speaking of reform at the district level, Firestone (1989), nonetheless, aptly noted that "participants can quickly become confused and overloaded if too many changes take place simultaneously. This may create the unusual situation of a district's being an active user of one reform while just as actively opposing another for fear that simultaneous implementation of both will

overtax the system" (p. 160). From the cases examined above, it appears that in one instance this was indeed the case; while in the other, both reforms were marginalized. At Oakfield, the essential school initiative came to set the dominant pattern for school reform activities. The vocational education reforms are being incorporated, albeit slowly and with caution, under the essential school banner, due in no small measure to the smallness of the school and extent of the social cohesion among the staff. In Oakfield's case, essential school reform was simply seen as more in line with and attuned to the normative understandings and structures already in place in a traditional, comprehensive high school than the vocational education reforms. At Edgewater, self-satisfied and enjoying the warm approbation of its community, the dominant pattern of a successful, suburban comprehensive high school remained firmly in place. Both essential school and vocational education reforms were quickly encapsulated, isolated, and relegated to the backburner (Berman & McLaughlin, 1975). While both were used to attain several legitimacy/ ceremonial ends (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, 1983), neither were attended to in any serious manner.

This, again, points out the importance of local context in deciding the fate of any reform effort. As Timar and Kirp (1989) noted, the success of a change effort rests solidly on the existing "organizational features of individual schools" (p. 506) as these have the ability to shape the reforms perhaps even more than the reforms can hope to shape the schools. Yet, what also emerges from the two cases is a glimmering of extended understandings of how these two reform strategies can be reconciled. Clearly, there are substantive philosophic differences between essential school reform and vocational education reform. These differences are a bit difficult to directly assess as essential school philosophy, and the Coalition's interpretation of it has evolved and changed significantly over time. Thus, its stance toward vocational education and school-to-work issues changes depending on the given time selected and often on the Coalition representative speaking.

The first book in Sizer's trilogy, *Horace's Compromise* (1988), actually offers the most extensive and inclusive consideration of the role of vocational education in an essential school. Sizer clearly does not dismiss vocational education as nonessential or irrelevant for an essential school: "Anything in life can be used as the stuff of learning, or at the very least as an entry to the stuff of learning. So-called vocational education should be looked at from this point of view . . ." (p. 115) and "to the extent that these [vocational education] activities form a bridge to the central subjects, I'm for them." In fact, Sizer

appears to endorse some of the core considerations of Tech Prep/School to Work reforms that call for a blending of the academic and vocational and an emphasis on applied instruction and learning experiences. As he notes,

> I'm opposed to schooling that focuses narrowly on particular job training. I'm for general education, but arranged so as to attract and to hold pupils. If hands-on skill experience is a route to general intellectual prowess, that's fine with me. There is no One Best Curriculum, and there can never be, if school is to be effective. Students—inconveniently, perhaps—differ. So then, must the ways to help them learn differ, even if there are common standards for the learning that are ultimately exhibited. Common ends, then, diverse means. (p. 231)

Yet, when looking across the trilogy, the above scattered references represent the bulk of direct consideration vocational education and its concomitant concerns received. As evidenced at the school level, the aphorism, "less is more," was much more likely to capture the attention of local reformers (Prestine, 1993), and that seemed to imply a diminished role for, if not the exclusion of, vocational education and its attendant reforms in an essential school that had intellectual rigor as its key focus. While the potential areas for connections and linkages between the two reform initiatives are clearly there, it was left to individual schools to discover them and put them together. Given all the other difficulties involved in and contingencies arising from the change efforts, that this did not happen does not seem unreasonable. Neither school searched for the complementary. At Oakfield, the two reforms compete only in the sense that both were and are present in the school. However, the essential school reform clearly sets the agenda for whole-school change, leaving the vocational education reforms scrambling to find ways to connect. At Edgewater, both reforms competed weakly for attention and legitimacy within the overwhelmingly successful traditional secondary school structure, and both lost badly.

Supremacy of Academic Subjects

While there are clear fissures and cracks that separate the academic subjects (see Siskin, 1994b), the chasm between the academic and vocational education programs is of near epic proportions. In the Alliance schools, as in nearly all traditional, comprehensive high schools, academic subjects rule the day. There are several reasons for this. First, academic or "core" subjects of high schools are supported by the educational systems both above and below. Caught between the emphasis on reading, writing, and arithmetic at the elementary school and the emphasis on subject area specializations and corresponding

departments in institutions of higher education, it is little wonder that high school structures and curriculum revolve around academic subject areas. These subject areas are likewise supported by powerful external groups (parents, community members, and professional organizations) who wield considerable clout and influence at the school level.

Most important, at least for the schools in this study, academic subjects also remain the clear barometer by which schools are adjudged successful or not. Whether the school is contending with the IGAP batteries, ACT, SAT, or graduation requirements for college admission, it is the traditional subject area concentrations that are the determining factor. As Firestone (1989) noted, it has indeed become a "management truism that 'you get what you measure'" (p. 160). Clearly, all the schools understood this as a fact of their existence. Each of the schools also clearly recognized that both district and state accountability contexts demand that these areas receive primary consideration. Thus, as Hargreaves (1994) contended, "the historical and political strength of academic subjects as sources of personal identity, career aspiration, and public accountability means that most secondary schools continue to operate as micropolitical worlds, with conflict and competition between their departments being an endemic feature of their existence" (p. 236).

The Trouble with Vocational Education Reforms

More troubling, perhaps, is the conclusion that, in most traditional, comprehensive high schools, vocational education reforms are not likely to fare well. There are varied reasons for this. First, the vocational education program from which these reforms spring has always enjoyed at best a peripheral, marginal status in traditional secondary schools (Little, 1993; Little & Threatt, 1991). Always subject to an "elective" status outside of the mainstream program and, thus, vulnerable to the ebb and flow of student interest and numbers, vocational education programs rarely achieve the stability of or parity with the core academic program. As mentioned previously, all current school accountability measures in Illinois are clearly aimed at the traditional core academic areas. This has had the effect of conferring a de facto second-class citizenship on vocational education that is pervasive. While not openly acknowledged, it is clearly reflected in both schools and among all the faculty. It seems unreasonable to expect schools to consider vocational education as a full contributor toward the intellectual development of children when state educational agencies clearly do not.

Directly related to this second-class citizenship of vocational education is the fact that the changes envisioned in the vocational education reforms call for the active involvement and participation of academic area teachers. At least from the data gathered here, it appears that most academic teachers at present are not convinced that this is appropriate for them and see little reason to become actively involved. In part, this may be explained by the phenomenon of the "balkanization," as Hargreaves (1994) has put it, of secondary schools, especially along the stark lines of the vocational versus academic. Academic teachers may well suspect that such involvement will only lead to further demands on their time, with few if any benefits to them, and even possibly a diminution of their professional prestige and status.

Not only do academic teachers see neither their status nor expertise as being acknowledged through such involvement, there is also a widespread and fundamental lack of understanding of the reforms. Part of this is due to sheer ignorance of the content of these reforms. While the name, Tech Prep, may be at least recognizable to a majority of the staff and administration, what it calls for or entails is a mystery to most. Directly related to this, the technical language/vocabulary used by the vocational education reforms serves to further marginalize them. Terms like Tech Prep, STW, SCANS, Education to Careers—all bandied about by vocational education folk and tech prep coordinators—do not resonate well with academic teachers or most school administrators. The terminology forms an impenetrable haze for most academic teachers, who tend to see these issues only in terms of vocational education concerns and, thus, not directly related to "their" separate concerns. If vocational education reforms are to succeed, then academic teachers must be able to see the clear relevance and benefits of these reforms for them. Teachers understand that the cost of change is steep and clear in terms of time, effort, and difficulties involved. The benefits must likewise be clear and relevant for those being asked to change. Otherwise, there appears to be little reason for them to invest in such efforts. At present, they remain unconvinced.

This also implies that if vocational education reforms are to succeed, they must be able to link and connect with other larger reforms in secondary schools. As evidenced in the above cases, this will not be easy. Yet, it seems most likely that vocational education reforms will be more successful when they connect to larger, more encompassing secondary reforms. Essential school reform still holds that possibility for linkage. However, individual schools are unlikely to be able to negotiate and refine such

understandings and connections by themselves, at least without great difficulty. Larger agencies at both the state and national level will likely have to assist schools in this articulation. Conversation at this level may be a prerequisite to substantive action at the individual school level.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Even a casual perusal of the literature on change in schools reveals that rarely if ever does one find strict adherence to the original intent of reform initiatives. Policy formulation, no matter how well and tightly conceived, inevitably takes a back seat to policy implementation (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987; McLaughlin, 1987). It is at the nitty gritty level of the local school that any reform policy is realized and takes form and substance. The range of this enactment can vary widely, from minimal and surface compliance to imaginative and opportunistic use (Berman & McLaughlin, 1975). Wilson and Rossman (1993) and others suggest that this phenomena of local variations in fidelity can be explained by examining two related facets of local response to school reform—(1) will and (2) capacity. The case studies above clearly illustrate the potency and influence of site specific understandings and commitments, of local capacities, of organizational/structural constraints and resources, and of the cultures of the individual schools on the implementation of both reforms. To the explanatory concepts of will and capacity, this research suggests a third—that of monitoring or accountability.

I use these three factors as a conceptual framework for reexamining the fate of the vocational education reforms in the local context of schools and for formulating some recommendations. My fundamental argument is that vocational education reforms face serious challenges in all three areas when it comes to implementation in traditional, comprehensive high schools. This can have the effect of placing the reform efforts from the start in a negative position and can allow the idiosyncrasies of local context and the dominance of the status quo to ride roughshod over the reform to an even greater extent than might be expected.

Will

As Firestone (1989) notes, "will" encompasses more than commitment and understanding on the part of organizational participants. It first implies a highly political process whereby a reform initiative wins the "active" endorsement of a dominant coalition in the school (Pfeffer, 1978). [I use the word "active" in quotation marks to denote the fact that many ideas, plans, and initiatives routinely get endorsed or assented to, by school organizations. "Active" endorsement refers to a level of enthusiasm and commitment beyond the routine.] While the composition of the dominant coalition will vary by site (Firestone, 1989), it is likely to consist of top school administrators, school board members, and, especially for school-based reforms, principals, and influential teacher leaders. Locally, parent and community groups and business and industry may also participate.

The backing and support of these "influentials" in the dominant coalition accomplishes several critical functions. First, they supply and control vital communication channels through which the reform gains the attention of and status in the larger organization. Second, these individuals either directly make, or are capable of influencing, critical decisions in the organization with regards to the reform. Third, to a large extent, they will be responsible for interpreting the change effort for others, and that interpretation/ understanding will determine the degree and fidelity of organizational response.

For the schools in this study, there was a clear lack of political will and clout behind the vocational education reforms and, to a lesser extent, the essential school reforms. The formation of a viable dominant coalition in support of reform was most nearly realized in Oakfield, at least for the essential school reforms. Even this, though, was hampered by incessant superintendent and principal turnover. The school board members, the "old Oakfield" community, and the long-tenured teaching staff at the high school basically formed an informal coalition that allowed the school and district to continue to function as administrators came and went. However, this maintenance function precluded much else. Even in a rural community that clearly valued and wished to preserve its vocational education program and attendant reforms, these received primarily maintenance support.

It seems reasonable to assert that vocational education reforms have not enjoyed the active endorsement of a dominant coalition in the case study schools. At best, the degree of success and expansion of the vocational education reforms at Oakfield rests solidly on the

shoulders of the two Tech Prep coordinators and some of the vocational teachers. In the Edgewater case, the vocational education reforms are, for all practical purposes, nonexistent at East Campus. At West Campus, any enthusiasm for or support of these reforms rests exclusively with those intimately connected with the vocational/ cooperative education program. Vocational education reforms, by themselves, are not likely to garner the political strength and clout necessary to attract the active endorsement of a dominant coalition. This would seem to leave two rather straightforward options: (1) either creatively find ways of attaching to and linking up with other larger secondary reform initiatives or (2) build a nontraditional coalition, inclusive of prominent community, parent, community college, and business/industry representatives that can then exert influence on traditional strongholds of power in school organizations.

Capacity

Reform designers and policymakers seem to tenaciously cling to two bedrock and completely fallacious assumptions about schools and reform. First, they appear to assume that schools will agree with and see the value of the intent of the given reform, and second, that schools have similar sets of resources and capabilities to respond to a given reform. While the former assumption concerns "will," the latter touches on the issue of capacity. Firestone (1989) put it well: "If will refers to the commitment to a decision, capacity refers to the wherewithal to actually implement it. The capacity to use reform is the extent to which the [school] has the knowledge, skills, personnel, and other resources necessary to carry out decisions" (p. 157).

The point is that local schools vary enormously in their capacity to respond to reform initiatives. Each school is characterized by a complex mix of transcending factors that include, but are not limited to, community tradition and history, local socioeconomic conditions, and the characteristics of the population being served; as well as school-specific conditions like culture, availability and allocation of resources, and the stability and tenure of the staff. I would add time as another significant determinant of capacity for change. From accumulated evidence (see Prestine, in press), it does seem that there are propitious moments for schools to enact significant changes. These windows of opportunity, however, can close as suddenly as they are opened, and it takes exceptionally alert and astute leadership to recognize these openings and be able to capitalize on them. On the other hand, there are clearly times when attempts at significant change are likely to be ill-advised

such as in times of exceptional instability for the school (Fullan, 1993; Prestine & Stringfield, in press).

As schools vary across these dimensions, so does their capacity for change. While these factors clearly must be understood and taken into consideration, most of them are largely out of the locus of control of schools. Two features directly related to capacity issues over which schools do exercise some degree of control, however, are allocations concerning personnel and resources.

While a dominant coalition may make the decision to pursue a particular reform, it is not likely that most members of the coalition will be directly involved with the daily, nitty-gritty work called for by the change effort. It is at this juncture that it is imperative that organizational rearrangements and role redefinitions be made in ways that clearly prioritize the change effort. Participants in the organization will value and commit to the change effort to the extent that there is evidence that top administration values and is committed to the effort. One substantive way of showing this is by identifying and recruiting the best able individuals for the tasks required. This means *not* assigning someone to head up a reform effort because he or she is one teaching assignment short anyway. At Oakfield, the inspired use of the two academic teachers along with release time for their efforts has served to infuse new life and vitality into the flagging Tech Prep effort. As these teachers already commanded respect within the faculty, they imbued the Tech Prep effort with a legitimacy that was previously lacking.

While somewhat overlapping with personnel, resources refer to the necessary time, material, and facilities needed to successfully move reform forward in the school. New knowledge, training, and technical assistance will likely be required. This means that staff development must be schoolwide and have a sustained and well-defined focus that directly contributes to the reform effort. While the essential school effort did not necessarily do a sterling job of attending to this, it certainly outstripped the vocational education reforms in reaching a significantly greater portion of the faculty through professional development activities. It seems clear that vocational education reforms need to attend to this issue in a much more systematic and serious manner, especially if academic teachers are to become knowledgeable enough to participate meaningfully.

Monitoring

Without consistent monitoring and oversight, any reform effort seems likely to falter and eventually fail. At once a great strength and a great weakness, the Coalition's adamant refusal to adopt any kind of "model" for essential school change left schools floundering as there simply were not any benchmarks by which to gauge either progress toward implementation or fidelity to intent. Schools will inevitably face a myriad of competing demands for their time and energies. Those initiatives that carry no built in oversight or monitoring will inevitably get less attention as others carrying more direct and obvious consequences elbow their way to the front of the line (Prestine, in press). As Firestone (1989) noted, without such oversight "it becomes difficult for school staff to understand that, among the welter of demands made on their time by students, parents, and other policies, this one should take top priority" (p. 161).

Wilson and Rossman (1993) argue that embedded within the specifics of a given reform are what they call "intuitive causal models" (p. 161). These models hold implicit predictive linear projections of the consequences of taking a certain course of action. For example, for the vocational education reforms, a part of the causal model was that increased academic focus and requirements would better prepare students for postsecondary educational and work experiences. However, in the case study schools, there was limited monitoring of the implementation of such reform changes and none of their outcomes. Little if any attention was paid to whether the causal model actually worked. In a classic instance of goal displacement, this lack of any kind of substantive monitoring of either implementation or outcomes allowed participants to abdicate any responsibility for the reform change and instead to focus on the constraints of their particular context. Thus, no one really took responsibility for the reform and, in turn, this allowed participants to focus more on the peculiarities and constraints of their local context than on the overall reform effort.

It seems that when such monitoring or oversight is absent, there will be little reason to suppose that the reforms will achieve more than superficial implementation and impact (Clune, White, & Patterson, 1989; McDonnell, 1988). Possibilities (what we can do) will be ignored while local constraints (why we cannot do this) will take center stage. Thus, local context will come to have an inordinate and deleterious effect on the reform initiative. It also appears that such oversight must come from external agencies. While some rare

schools may be capable of self-monitoring, the past decade and a half of the history of reforms in schools has not been overwhelmingly favorable to this conclusion.

Clearly, as these case studies have shown, conceptions of change, whether essential school or vocational education reforms, cannot be thought of as either linear or context free (Cohen, 1990; Prestine, 1993). Instead, the centrality of the local context must be highlighted and ways and means found to exploit its resources and uniqueness while not allowing it to overwhelm the reform initiative itself. Especially for essential school and vocational education reforms that aim at changing the core technology (curriculum, instruction, and assessment) of schools, this has important ramifications for all participants. It is helpful at this juncture to keep in mind an early admonition from Sizer (1991) that everything of importance in school is connected with everything else. As Wilson and Rossman (1993) note, "altering the curriculum has profound implications for teaching strategies, organizational structures and supports, and professional relations as well as for a host of other elements of schools" (p. 191). Especially vocational education reforms need to be mindful of these connections.

The dilemma of the vocational education reforms in traditional, comprehensive high schools is complex, multifaceted, and varies from context to context in significant ways. The vocational/academic split is, at once, school-site specific and, yet, larger than any individual school. As Hargreaves (1994) noted, "Clearly, this is an issue that extends far beyond the individual school itself to the educational and social community outside it, where any such struggles to equalize and establish value between rigor and relevance, academic and practical mentalities, and high- and low-status knowledge will challenge the interest of the powerful and not be ceded easily . . ." (pp. 236-237).

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APPENDIX A
ACTION PLAN: B16
INTEGRATION OF A TECH PREP/EDUCATION TO CAREERS PROGRAM INTO ESSENTIAL SCHOOLS

The Tech Prep/Education to Careers (TP/ETC) program and the essential school program are based on similar foundations. The TP/ETC program will enhance our essential school program. The essential school philosophy of the student as worker is also shared by Tech Prep. Students in a Tech Prep program who are expected to learn to work cooperatively on integrated projects much the same as our students have been doing because of the essential school program. The portfolios that our students currently keep are also an integral part of a Tech Prep program. Our Elmwood High School Graduate document was designed to make sure that our students are prepared to pursue the career of their choice. Goal #6 states that the EHS graduate will demonstrate excellence or proficiency in life and career planning. The TP/ETC program focuses on this goal as well. The addition of Tech Prep Tuesdays to our curriculum will provide the student with career information that will help him or her with career planning. Other Tech Prep activities such as career field trips and speakers, interest inventories, and learning style assessments will also give the student vital information to help with this decision. These activities along with job shadowing will assist the students with the career papers that they currently do as an assessment of the EHS Graduate. Besides focusing on Goal #6, the TP/ETC program also focuses on giving the student the education that he or she will need in a technological world. The program emphasizes that instruction in effective communication, critical thinking, problem solving, and technology are necessary in a global world. These are all goals of the essential school program and are included in the EHS Graduate document. It is really difficult to separate the essential school program and the TP/ETC program since both programs share many of the same goals; therefore, it will be imperative that both programs work together very closely toward the common goal of preparing the EHS graduate for the future.

APPENDIX B
HIGH SCHOOL: WHAT A GRADUATE SHOULD LOOK LIKE

Using the nine common essential school principles, the high school teachers, administration, Board of Education, and members of our community developed the "Oakfield Graduate." This is a written model of skills the group believes a high school student should possess upon graduation. During their high school career, the students will document or demonstrate excellence or proficiency in each of the italicized areas.

Communication

The high school graduate demonstrates excellence or proficiency in the following:

- Speaking and writing articulately and effectively
- Reading and listening actively

Problem Solving

The high school graduate demonstrates excellence or proficiency in the following:

- Researching
- Investigating and using the scientific method
- Computing and calculating
- Critical thinking

Design, Production, and Performance

The high school graduate demonstrates excellence or proficiency in one or more of the following areas:

- Drama/dance
- Music
- Visual arts
- Media
- Technology
- Prose or verse

Social and World Relationships

The high school graduate demonstrates excellence or proficiency in the following:

- Concepts of U.S. History, citizenship, and government
- Knowledge of other peoples and their cultures

Concepts of a Natural Environment

The high school graduate demonstrates excellence or proficiency in the key concepts of the environment, including the following:

- The physical, biological, and chemical components
- Their interrelatedness
- Awareness of personal impact on the environment

Personal Growth

The high school graduate demonstrates excellence or proficiency in the following:

- Life and career planning
- Ways to develop and maintain wellness
- Social interaction